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# CULTURE CONFLICTS

## CAUSE AND CURE

*By*

P. KODANDA RAO

(Servants of India Society)

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To  
**MY WIFE**  
**Mary Campbell Rao.**

She, of the Occident, and I of the Orient,  
deny  
East vs. West  
and proclaim  
the Unity of Civilisation.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

What are cultures and civilizations? How many are they? What is their origin and character? When and why do they co-operate and when conflict? These are questions which are not merely of academic significance but of practical import. For the exponents of civilizations undertake not only to describe but also to prescribe. They profess to tell us not only what our various cultures are but also how one culture should behave towards another. They claim that theirs is not only a "pure" but also an "applied" science; it is not only descriptive but also directive. If they all agreed in their directions, if not descriptions, most of us would be content to follow them without question. But, as we shall see later on, they do not seem to agree. Their descriptions, evaluations and directions are different, causing confusion and conflict.

We shall examine if and to what extent current concepts of civilization are valid, how and why cultures are different and conflicting, and what should be our attitude and behaviour.

We shall find that many of the concepts are invalid. We shall then venture to suggest a theory of culture which seems to be truer than the current ones and which, incidentally, tends to reduce conflicts based on cultural considerations.

## CHAPTER II

### CONFLICTS OF CULTURES

#### 1. Mahatma Gandhi on East and West

"Of myself," said Mahatma Gandhi, "whilst I have freely acknowledged my debt to Western culture, I can say that whatever service I have been able to render to the nation has been due *entirely* to the retention by me of the Eastern culture to the extent it was possible . . . It is difficult to estimate the loss of energy caused to the nation by her children being obliged to resist the encroachments of a culture which, however good in itself, was unsuited for them whilst they had not imbibed and become rooted in their own"<sup>1</sup> "We have not been able to estimate foreign culture at its proper value. How can we expect to rise with borrowed culture?"<sup>2</sup> "The pandemonium that is going on in Europe shows that modern civilization represents forces of evil and darkness, whereas the ancient, i. e. Indian civilization, represents in its essence the divine force. Modern civilization is chiefly materialistic as ours is chiefly spiritual."<sup>3</sup> After thus *describing* the contrasts and conflicts between the two civilizations, Mahatma Gandhi said : "I have been a determined opponent of modern civilization." He advised Indians to "think twice" before "emulating that civilization in our motherland." "But I have been told 'How can we help it, seeing that our rulers bring that culture to our motherland.' Do not make any mistake about it at all. I do not for one moment believe that it is for any rulers to bring that culture to you unless you are pre-

1. Mahatma Gandhi, TO THE STUDENTS, p. 29.

2. Ibid. p. 64.

3. Ibid. p. 48.



pared to accept it, and if it be that the rulers bring that culture before us, I think that we have forces within ourselves to enable us to reject that culture without having to reject the rulers themselves.”<sup>1</sup> While thus rejecting modern European civilization, the Mahatma proclaimed, “Many of us believe, and I am one of them, that through our civilization we have a message to deliver to the world.”<sup>2</sup> An analysis of these statements shows that the Mahatma postulated two civilizations, the Eastern and Western, which are ancient and modern in time, spiritual and material in character respectively, granted that Western culture might be good in itself, acknowledged his own indebtedness to it, but asserted that it was not good for Indians, because it was foreign to them and advised them to resist and reject that culture and to adhere to their own, and proclaimed that Indian civilization had a message for the world.

What exactly is meant by Western or Eastern civilization? How do we know that the former is modern and material and the latter ancient and spiritual? How is Western civilization foreign to India and the East? How is it good for the West and not for the East? How can the East be indebted to the West? Why should the East resist and reject Western civilization? How can India have a message for the whole world?

Whatever be the answers to these questions, is there at least general agreement about them among scholars, experts and leaders of public opinion which the laymen may accept and follow without serious misgivings? Or, is there disagreement among them which leaves the laymen confused in understanding and uncertain in behaviour? Taking Eastern and Western civilizations, for a start, let us see what others than Mahatma Gandhi have to say on the subject.

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1. Ibid. p. 36.

2. Ibid. p. 49.

## 2. More Pronouncements on East and West

Sir S. Radhakrishnan said that "The East and the West are not so sharply divided as alarmists would make us believe."<sup>1</sup> In any event, "Whether we like it or not, East and West have come together and can no more part. The spatial nearness is preparing the way for a spiritual approximation and interchange of treasures of mind and imagination. If we are nurtured exclusively on the past of Europe or of Asia we cannot consider ourselves to be cultivated. The thought and experience of one half of humanity cannot be neglected without peril. If we are to correct the narrowness resulting from a one-sided and exclusive preoccupation with either Eastern or Western thought, if we are to fortify our inner life with the dignity or a more perfect and universal experience, an understanding of each other's cultures is essential. It is a foolish pride that impels some of us to combat all external influences. Every spiritual or scientific advance which any branch of the human family achieves is achieved not for itself alone but for all mankind."<sup>2</sup> He, therefore, advocated "cultural synthesis" through "co-operation, accommodation and toleration" as against "identification, imitation and absolutism."<sup>3</sup> He noted that the process was already in action. "East and West are moving out of their historical past towards a way of thinking which shall eventually be shared in common by all mankind even as material appliances are."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, he, like the Mahatma, thought that

1. Radhakrishnan, KALKI, p. 9.

2. Radhakrishnan, EASTERN RELIGIONS AND WESTERN THOUGHT, pp. 115-116.

3. Radhakrishnan, KALKI, p. 13.

4. Radhakrishnan, EASTERN RELIGIONS AND WESTERN THOUGHT, p. 258.

Indian civilization had a message for the whole world. "The fate of the human race hangs on a rapid assimilation of the qualities associated with the mystic religions of the East."<sup>1</sup>

Rabindranath Tagore said that Western civilization, "when not affected by its unnatural relationship with the East, preserves a singular strength of moral conduct in its domain of social life which has its great inspiration for all of us."<sup>2</sup> He, therefore, advocated collaboration of East and West, an exchange of the best between the two, each retaining its characteristic values and seeking a "synthesis between West and East."<sup>3</sup>

"I have become a queer mixture of East and West," said Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, "out of place everywhere, at home, nowhere. Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me, as she clings to all her children, in innumerable ways . . . They are both part of me."<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Sarojini Naidu has been described as "so wonderful a product of both East and West that it would be impossible to say to which civilization she owes most."<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Mrs. Hansa Mehta bitterly lamented that "our political life, our social life, our literary life has got the impress of the West till we cannot call our soul our own."<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Rajani Kanta Das noted that during the last two centuries or more the civilizations of the East and West had been brought close together, and that such contact created

1. Ibid. p. 259.
2. Murray-Tagore, EAST AND WEST, p. 47.
3. Ibid. p. 781-82.
4. Nehru, AUTOBIOGRAPHY, p. 597.
5. O'Mally, MODERN INDIA AND THE WEST, p. 479.
6. Hansa Mehta, WOMEN in MODERN INDIA, pp. 100-1.

possibilities of integration and co-ordination of divergent but mutually complementary cultures, and he expressed the hope that they would fuse so as to form a new civilization.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Dr. Kunhi Kanan devoted two whole books, *THE WEST* and *A CIVILIZATION AT BAY*, to demonstrate the incomparability of the civilizations of the East and the West, to warn Indians of the disastrous consequences of adopting Western civilization and to advise them to stick to their own Eastern civilization and develop along its own lines. He warned that "imitation of one culture by another is the surest and easiest method of destroying identity," and that it was "folly on the part of any civilization to embark on a policy of imitation in the hope of saving itself." "The wiser course," he said, "was to perfect the institutions which have served well in the past, to increase their resistance to the inroads of a foreign civilization, and perfect the means and methods of self-expression."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Dhirendranath Roy, in his book, *THE SPIRIT OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION*, was stung to bitter indignation because Prof. Ellsworth Huntington had graded Western civilization as superior to the Eastern, and Sir Henry Norman has denied that Asia, other than Japan, had any civilization at all. Prof. Huntington had constructed a map of civilizations, compared and graded them according to a "European definition" of civilization, which he claimed was also a "world-wide definition". In that map, Western civilization was given a higher grade than Eastern. Sir Henry Norman had, in his book *THE FAR EAST* said, "Asia, always excepting Japan, never has been civilised, and never will be, till a greater change comes than this age is

1. Rajani Kanta Das, *INDIA AND A NEW CIVILIZATION*, p. 317.
2. Kunhi Kanan, *THE WEST*, p. 322.

likely to see otherwise than at the mouth of the cannon and the point of the bayonet.”<sup>1</sup> Roused to righteous indignation by these derogatory remarks, Dr. Roy defended and exalted Indian civilization, which was “our own”, “which was naturally India’s peculiarity”.<sup>2</sup> which was in no way inferior to Western civilization but only different from it and was besides wholly “indigenous” and self-evolved, and not a hotch-potch of elements borrowed from alien cultures as John Dewey had admitted Western civilization to be. It was the sole survivor of the ancient civilizations of the world. He then castigated the “cultural hypocrites” and the “cultural renegades” among Indians who would deviate from their own Indian culture and adopt foreign Western civilization, who would wear trousers instead of *dhoties*, who would eat with forks instead of fingers.

Mr. Arthur Mayhew said that East and West stood for “two types of culture,” which “though they had reacted on one another, had not yet fused; their interaction has so far been responsible for antagonism rather than co-operation.”<sup>4</sup> His solution of the conflict was that India should accept Christ and the New Testament, “the spiritual foundations of our Western institutions and civilization.”<sup>4</sup>

William Archer had, in his book INDIA AND THE FUTURE, said that India was “barbarous, barbarian and barbarism.”<sup>5</sup> Whereupon Sir John Woodroffe was moved to write his book, IS INDIA CIVILISED? in which he defended Indian culture and asserted that it had not only an academic interest but also a bearing on the future of the

1. Roy, THE SPIRIT OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION, P. 10.
2. Ibid. p. 95.
3. Roy, THE SPIRIT OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION, p. 243.
4. Mayhew, THE EDUCATION OF INDIA, p. 177.
5. Ibid, p. 185.

world. He urged India to remain true to her own culture, retain her cultural freedom and cast off all foreign and un-assimilated cultures. He felt that the conflict between the East and West was one of the oldest problems of the world and he wondered if Indian civilization would be renewed or be broken up and provide yet "another instance of that degradation which has followed the introduction of Western civilization among Eastern people."<sup>1</sup>

Rene Guenon in his book *EAST AND WEST* thought that it was not valid to speak absolutely of superiority and inferiority of different civilizations, but if nonetheless a hierarchy was instituted, intellectual civilization was superior to the material one, and consequently, Eastern civilization, which had retained its high intellectual tradition and stable character, was superior to the Western one which had become material and unstable. He deplored that Orientals were degrading themselves by adopting Western civilization instead of helping to raise Western civilization to the level of the Oriental civilization.

Prof. C. E. M. Joad, took a somewhat similar view. The East was "the guardian of a traditional way of life which the West has lost, the repository of certain values which the West has forgotten or has never known."<sup>2</sup> And he summed up his appraisal and recommendation thus: "The West has the energy and the vitality of civilization still comparatively young, yet it does not know into what channels to direct them. Possessing in abundance the means to the good life, it is without knowledge of the ends. The East possesses the tradition and the knowledge, but it is without the vitality to make the tradition live or the

1. Woodroffe, *IS INDIA CIVILISED ?* p. vii.

2. Joad, *COUNTER ATTACK FROM THE EAST*, p. 32.

knowledge to spread, and is in danger of being swamped by the vigorous tides that blow from the West. Each lacks something to give. Can they, then, be brought together"?<sup>1</sup>

Betty Heimann, however, thought that the two civilizations had developed on two wholly different and divergent planes, which made convergence at any time impossible; Western civilization had an anthropological basis and it centred in man, while Eastern civilization had a cosmological basis and it centred in the Universe.<sup>2</sup> And, hence, never the twain shall meet.

G. K. Gokhale, in his Address on *East and West* at the Universal Races Congress, said that "in India the West had, so to say, entered into the very bone and marrow of the East". Lothrop Stoddard said that India alone stood out against the West, while the rest of the East accepted it. "Nowhere in Asia, except possibly in India, is there any effective revolt against *Westernism as a way of life*. . . . For the first time in history, *the West has got under the Oriental's skin*. The whiteman may everywhere be thrown out bodily, but his ways will remain".<sup>3</sup> All the same, he wondered if "our distinctly Western civilization" can be "successfully transplanted and generalised". He asked: "Will the outcome be for the good or for the ill? Is the leaven of Westernism a vital tonic, or is it a baneful toxin infecting the East with death and decay?"<sup>4</sup> For answer, he recalled the adage that "one man's meat is another man's poison". J. Ramsay Macdonald gave a more direct answer. "We sought to give the Eastern mind a Western content and

1. Ibid. p. 34.

2. Heimann. INDIAN AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHY, p. 146

3. Stoddard. THE CLASHING TIDES OF COLOUR, pp. 196-91

4. Ibid. 206.

environment; we have succeeded only too well in establishing intellectual chaos”.

From what has been noted above, there seems to be no consensus of opinion regarding the character, the values and the mutual relations between the so-called Eastern and the Western civilizations. The divergence of opinion is indeed striking. Some authorities hold the two civilizations to be just different; others hold them to be complementary, or contradictory or conflicting. Some say that Western civilization is superior to the Eastern; others take the opposite view; still others deprecate comparison. Some advance the view that the two are so different that they can never meet; other suggest that a synthesis is possible and desirable. To the questions, what is western civilization and what should be the attitude of the East towards it, there is no agreed answer, but a confusing medley of contradictions.

Can all these divergent views be equally true? Is any one of them true? If so, which? Can we find the truth regarding Western civilization and arrive at a clear direction regarding its attitude towards the Eastern?

### **3. Cultural Imperialism and Autonomy**

Cultural contacts and conflicts exist not only as between East and West but also within the West. Within the East Japanese cultural imperialism conflicts with the culture autonomy of China. In the West there has been contacts and conflicts between the cultures represented by the Nazis, the Russian Communists and the Anglo-Americans. France claims cultural imperialism in Syria and Lebanon, while the latter claim cultural autonomy.

More directly concerned with cultural conflicts are the so called “minorities treaties” signed after the Great War



of 1914-18, "Cultural minorities" drew up a "petition of rights" or a "Minorities' Charter", demanding "free, cultural development" and "cultural autonomy" for minorities in the states created by the Versailles Treaty. Cultural autonomy and irredentism were among the most difficult problems that faced the peace-makers after the last war. Their unsatisfactory solution was one of the contributory factors to the present World War. They are likely to become even more intractable in the next peace settlement.

#### **4 Hindu-Muslim**

In India the Hindu-Muslim problem has often been said to be a cultural one, and various solutions have been suggested to solve it. One of them is Pakistan. In his address to the Muslim League on the 22nd March 1940, Mr. M. A. Jinnah, the President of the League, said that he demand. Pakistan because Muslims wished to "develop to the fullest extent our spiritual, cultural and economic, social and political life in a way we think best, in consonance with our own ideals and according to the genius of our people". Dr. A. Latif advocated the zonal division of India with a view to ensuring to Muslims and Hindus "perfect freedom to live their own cultural lives in homelands of their own". Mr. Yusuf Ali in his CULTURAL HISTORY OF INDIA said that there was no cultural conflict between Hindus and Muslims in pre-British days, though there were military and political conflicts, that during the Mutiny a common cultural impulse animated the rebels both Hindu and Muslim, and that the post-Mutiny cultural conflict between them began during the Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton. The Mutiny itself was a cultural conflict between the Hindus and Muslims on the one hand and the British on the other. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said that "the real struggle today

in India is not between Hindu culture and Muslim culture, but between these two and the conquering scientific culture of modern civilization. Those who are desirous of preserving "Muslim culture", whatever that may be, need not worry about Hindu culture, but should withstand the giant from the West. I have no doubt, personally, that all efforts, Hindu or Muslim, to oppose modern scientific and industrial civilization are doomed to failure, and I shall watch their failure without regret".<sup>1</sup> Continuing he said, "I have tried to understand what "Muslim culture" is, but I confess that I have not succeeded".<sup>2</sup> P. N. Bose thought that Hindu civilization not only resisted Muslim culture, but also partially Hinduised it.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Julius Germinus, Nizam Professor of Islamic Culture, Santiniketan, in his book MODERN MOMENTS IN ISLAM said "The inspirations for progress in Islamic culture came from outside Arabia and had its origin in non-Arab sources".

### **5. Primitive Vs. Civilised**

Another kind of culture contact is between what are called the 'primitive' and 'backward' cultures and the 'advanced' civilizations. Dr. Verrier Elwin said that such contacts between the "primitives" and the "civilised" were unfavourable to the former, even disastrous to them. They suffered from "loss of nerve", "loss of interest in living", "psychical apathy and physical decline". He thought it "unfortunate" that "the Indian aborigine is all too ready to respond to the slightest hint that he should abandon his old culture and interests".<sup>4</sup> He lamented that Baiga culture was so undermined that the Baigas were dreaming non-

1. Nehru, AUTOBIOGRAPHY, p. 470.

2. Ibid. p. 471

3. Bose, EPOCHS OF CIVILIZATION, p. 76.

4. Elwin, THE BAIGA, p. 512.

Baiga dreams.<sup>1</sup> Speaking at the Indian Science Congress in 1939, Dr. N. W. Mazumdar bore testimony to the disastrous effects on tribal vitality and tribal population of contact with "civilization". In his Presidential address to the Indian Science Congress, Section of Anthropology, in 1941, Dr. T. C. Das emphasised the need for consulting anthropologists with respect to culture-contacts between the primitives and the civilized, and he noted with satisfaction that in certain parts of the world attempts were being made to bring about a "synthesis of European and local cultures". Dr. Elwin, however, pleaded passionately that the Indian aborigines should be saved from civilization and that they should be protected therefrom, and for that purpose they should be left alone for some time, until "civilization is itself civilised".<sup>2</sup> He advocated that "everything possible should be done for the tribe's progress and advantage, provided that the quality of tribal life is not impaired, that tribal culture is not destroyed and that tribal freedom is restored or maintained".<sup>3</sup>

## 6. Whites and Blacks

Concerning culture-contacts between whites and Negroes, Pitt-Rivers asserted the "incompatibility of infusing a foreign culture upon people who are not adapted to it".<sup>4</sup> Liberia was "the most Europeanised of the African states", but it nevertheless "developed along lines of her own" and was merely "handicapped" by the civilization of her "white foster-parents", a civilization to which she "never had, and never could have become adapted, as any

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1. Ibid, p. 415.

2. Elwin, THE ABORIGINAL, p. 31.

3. Elwin, THE BAIGA, p. 515.

4. Pitt-Rivers, CLASH OF CULTURES AND CONTACT OF RACES, p. 235.

biologist should have foretold",<sup>1</sup> for it was one of "the immutable laws of nature, however unwelcome or even deplorable the facts may seem".<sup>2</sup> Pitt-Rivers, therefore, advised "our dark-skinned subjects" that they should "learn to value whatever was sound or beautiful in their own culture, in which may be found the surest promise of their own racial achievement, in place of blindly following the lead of people whose proffered gifts they can never truly make their own".<sup>3</sup>

A review of these instances of culture-contacts, confirms the conclusion that there is no general agreement as regards the results of such contacts, or as regards the recommendations for future conduct. Some speak of contacts resulting in assimilation and betterment and recommend greater and more intimate contacts, while other speak of conflicts, unhappiness and decay, and plead for isolation or segregation of cultures and letting each culture develop on its own lines in its own homeland.

Wherein lies the truth, if any ?

1. Ibid, p. 235.
2. Pitt-Rivers, CLASH OF CULTURES AND CONTACT OF RACES, p. 14.
3. Ibid p. 241

## CHAPTER III

### CULTURE & CIVILIZATION

Sociologists have proclaimed that "the civilizational role of borrowing is fundamental. The importation of foreign products and ideas enables a group, whether modern or primitive, to profit by the cultural opportunities of its neighbours".<sup>1</sup> Why, then, should culture contacts lead to conflicts?

Before we seek the answer to the question, we may examine the two words which occur in the above quotation, *culture* and *civilization*. Do they mean the same thing? At once we face one of the difficulties rather common in the social sciences, namely, the lack of precise and agreed definitions of the terms used. The two terms, *culture* and *civilization* are among the most frequently used and yet they are among the least defined. Let us note some of the connotations of the terms.

Compton's *Pictured Encyclopaedia* speaks of man passing through three stages, Savagery, Barbarism and Civilization, and says that "Culture differs from civilization in that it is a local variation within the stage of civilization". Oswald Spengler speaks of each culture ending in a civilization, of a civilization being the "organic-logical sequel the fulfilment and the finale of a culture". He says that "Every Culture has *its own* Civilization" and that "the Civilization is the inevitable *destiny* of the Culture", a "strict and necessary *organic succession*".<sup>2</sup>

P. N. Bose takes the view that they are different but not in the sense of Spengler. Civilization deals with

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1. Goldenwiser, *EARLY CIVILIZATION*, p. 27.

2. Spengler, *DECLINE OF THE WEST*, p. 31.

material and external institutions, while culture deals with internal and spiritual values.<sup>1</sup> K. M. Munshi puts it strikingly when he says, "Culture is not civilization".<sup>2</sup> R. M. McIver makes the contrast even more striking when he says that civilization may be the enemy of culture! He says, it would, in fact, be well if we could restrict the term "civilization to this whole system of communal mechanism, and reserve the term "culture" to those interests which are or should be sought for their own sake, as ultimate. The importance of making this distinction is so great as to outweigh our reasonable reluctance to refine on the terms of every-day speech. For "civilization" so understood, though it is itself the condition of advanced culture, may yet become a substitute for it or even an enemy to it. It has been well said that "nothing probably is more dangerous for the human spirit that science without poetry, civilization without culture" and life of the capitals of civilization, ancient and modern, has often illustrated the truth of this saying. Once this distinction is realised, we realise also the deceptiveness of "civilization", and be better able to look beyond those trapping of glittering mechanism which so often conceal or even foster an inner primiteveness of life".<sup>3</sup>

Rivers uses both the terms as synonymous as when he speaks of "European Culture" as "European Civilization" and to include both the material and the non-material aspects.<sup>4</sup> Lars Ringbom also uses both civilization and culture for both the material and the ideal, to include both the "outward environment" and the "inward environ-

1. Bose, EPOCHS OF CIVILIZATION, p. 54.

2. Munshi, AKHAND HINDUSTAN,

3. McIver, THE COMPANY, pp. 179-80.

4. Rivers, PSYCHOLOGY AND ETHNOLOGY, p. 301.

ment”,<sup>1</sup> for “the material and the ideal are two sides in culture”.<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Wiley identifies culture with civilization and to include both material and non-material. “In every day language, *civilization* is often employed to indicate an ‘advanced’ society, in contrast with a more primitive one. The word is associated with the idea of science, art, literature or Christianity. In this sense we would be considered civilised; the Eskimo would not be. But this is an incorrect usage of the word. . . . Accurate discussion necessitates the use of the word *civilization* to mean the same thing as social heritage and culture. Consequently, it must be insisted that all peoples have a civilization, for, as we have seen, all peoples have a culture”.<sup>3</sup> And he defines culture or civilization as “social heritage” or “the complex whole which includes material goods, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.<sup>4</sup>

Sir. S. Radhakrishnan, however, seems to use the two terms as equivalent, but to mean only the “moral conceptions, religious ideas and social outlook”, as distinguished from the technical and material goods.

F. H. Hankins notes that sometimes a distinction is made between *civilizations of nations*, ancient and modern, primarily based on common *territory*, and *cultures of tribes*, based on kinship. He however prefers to use culture in the inclusive sense and as synonymous with social heritage.<sup>5</sup> Ralf Turner defines culture as “the sum total of

1. Ringbom, THE RENEWAL OF CULTURE, p. 115.

2. Ibid, p. 120.

3. Davis and Barnes, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY, pp. 511-512.

4. Ibid. p. 513.

5. Hankins, INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF SOCIETY p. 380.

the man-made ways and means of doing things ”.<sup>1</sup>

In this study we shall use both the words as synonymous and to include both material and non-material aspects of culture or civilization.

1. Turner, THE GREAT CULTURAL TRADITIONS? p. 15.



## Chapter IV.

### SOME CURRENT CONCEPTS OF CULTURES

#### 1. Number of Cultures

Contacts of cultures naturally postulates plurality of cultures; there must be more than one. How many are they?

There seems to be no agreement about it. Generally speaking, two major civilizations are recognised, the Eastern or Oriental and the Western or Occidental. Clark Wisler recognised three major civilizations, the Eastern, the Western and the Middle-American, the last representing the civilization of the people of the New World, of North America and South America, before the advent of the European or Western civilization.<sup>1</sup> Oswald Spengler described nine great civilizations, the Arabian, the Babylonian, the Chinese, the Classical (Greek and Roman) the Egyptian, the Indian, the Mexican, the Russian and the Western.<sup>2</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee distinguished two "species" in the "genus" of "societies": "civilizations" and "primitive societies". Of the former, there were twenty-one, and of the latter over six hundred and fifty.<sup>3</sup>

Like the classification of plants and animals into phyla, orders genera and species and varieties, cultures also are divided and subdivided into smaller units. For instance, Western civilization is often sub-divided into the British, the Gaelic, the German etc. Oriental civilization is often sub-divided into the Japanese, the Chinese, the Indian

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1. Wisler, *MAN AND CULTURE*, p. 241.

2. Hoyland, *HISTORY AS DIRECTION*, p. 21.

3. Toynbee, *THE STUDY OF HISTORY*, Vol. I, p. 148.

and so on. Each of these is further sub-divided. For instance, the Indian civilization includes the Bengalee, the Marathi, etc. Besides these divisions of "civilization" in the sense of Toynbee, there are also "primitive societies" in India, as for instance, the Gond, the Baiga, the Santhal.

Classification, and therefore the number of civilizations varies with each enumerator, and there is no general agreement about it. For instance, Dixon sub-divided the civilization of the United States into four cultures and Ellsworth Huntington divided it into five.

## 2. Homelands of Cultures

Each civilization is said to have its own geographical homeland, its culture-area, to which it is ecologically adapted, even as aquatic plants are ecologically adapted to their watery habitat. According to Dixon, "each ecological area produced a culture correlated to it."<sup>1</sup> The inhabited surface of the earth is said to be like a chess-board or a mosaic, consisting of a series of culture-areas, each with a culture. China is the culture-area of Chinese culture; Egypt that of Egyptian culture, India of Indian culture. According to Wiley, the Western or Euro-American culture-area "embraces the United States, Canada, England, and the western *nations* of the continent of Europe. It also includes some of the colonies of these nations, as parts of Australia, South Africa, etc."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, primitive cultures, all over the world in earlier times and in such parts of the world where they survive today, have each a culture-area, ecologically adapted to it. Wiley mentions that in the North American continent there were, before the arrival of the

1. Dixon, THE BUILDING OF CULTURES, p. 285.

2. Davis and Barnes, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY, p. 546.

Europeans, nine-culture areas with nine distinct cultures.<sup>1</sup> In India today, the Baiga-Chak is the culture area of the Baiga culture. The Nahas, the Khasi, the Lushai have their culture-areas in Assam; the Santhals, the Mundas and the Groans have their culture-areas in Bihar; the Gonds in the Central Provinces, the Bhils in the Bombay Province, and so on.

### 3. Culture-Pattern

Perhaps the most fundamental of the current concepts of civilizations is that of *culture-pattern*. Each culture has a large number of culture-traits, which are said to form a culture-pattern. Every civilization has all the fundamental traits to enable it to survive such as food, clothing, housing, marriage and recreation. The common human needs bring about basic similarity in the culture-traits in all cultures. But what distinguishes one culture from another is the configuration of its traits. "The word *pattern*, as related to the *pattern* of any culture, embraces those elements, or combinations of elements, that make that civilization stand out from all others. The pattern of each civilization is unique; it is this pattern that enables us to distinguish one civilization from another." Thus, Chinese culture has a pattern which is unique and distinguishes it from, say, the Egyptian. The Baigas have a pattern of culture which is different from that of the Gonds or Santhals or the 'civilised.' If the earth's inhabited area is a mosaic of cultures, each culture is a mosaic of culture-traits in definite relations to one another.

### 4. Cultures as Organisms

The culture-traits of a culture not only form a unique pattern, but they are all said to be originally united so that the culture acts like an organism, like an individual.

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1. Ibid p. 545

Spengler speaks of a civilization as a "culture organism". "Culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action".<sup>1</sup> The whole is something more than the sum of all its parts, it is a unique and new entity. Gun-powder is not merely a sum of sulphur, saltpetre and charcoal, but something different from all of them. Similarly, a pattern of culture is not merely an aggregate of its culture traits but a new entity. "Culture, likewise, are more than the sum of their traits".<sup>2</sup> Dhirendra Nath Roy speaks of a civilization being an "organism", and of Indian civilization being "organic in the full sense of the term".<sup>3</sup> According to Lowes Dickinson, "Civilization is a whole. Its art, its religion, its way of life, all hang together with its economic and technical development".<sup>4</sup> "In every type of civilization," said Bronislaw Malinowski, "every custom, material object, idea, and belief fulfills some vital function, has some task to accomplish, represents an indispensable part within a working whole". Verrier Elwin, in his Presidential Address to the Anthropological Section of the Indian Science Congress, Delhi, advanced a similar view regarding the cultures of the aborigines in India. Each culture was an organic and integrated whole, all the traits of which were vital to its existence.

### 5. Life-Cycles of Cultures

Spengler went farthest in conceiving of cultures as organic units. He not only called them "culture-organisms"

1. Davis and Barnes, AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY, p.533.
2. Benedict, PATTERN OF CULTURE, p.46.
3. Roy, THE SPIRIT OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION, pp.xvi and 42.
4. Stoddard, CLASHING TIDES OF COLOUR, p.195.
5. Pitt-Rivers, THE CLASH OF CULTURES AND THE CONTACT OF RACES, p.9.

but also postulated a life-cycle of birth, youth, age and death for each of them. Each culture had its "spring", the age of myth and legend; its "summer", the age of religion and philosophy; its "autumn", the age of cultural maturity and enlightenment; and finally, its "winter", the age of break-up, decline and decay. Thereafter, somewhere and sometime the slumbering "soul" of another culture awakens to a new spring and goes through its life-cycle.<sup>1</sup> At the time of his writing, some cultures were already dead, others were in different stages of their life-cycles. The Babylonian, the Egyptian and the Mexican were dead; the Russian was in its infancy; the Arabic, the Chinese, the Classical and the Indian were far advanced towards senility, and the Western was well past its prime and was hastening to its decline and was due to die in a couple of hundred years.<sup>2</sup>

Toynbee also, who distinguished twenty-one civilizations, apart from primitive societies, listed sixteen of them as dead and extinct and only five as living. The latter were the Western, the Orthodox Christian, the Islamic, the Hindu and the Far Eastern.

The idea of the birth, growth and death, of the rise and fall of civilizations, is very widely and commonly held.

## **6. The Individual and the Group**

A civilization is said to be a pattern of culture which is shared in common by a number of individual persons. Indian civilization is a pattern of culture which is shared in common by millions of individual Indians. What is the relation of the individual to his culture-group? It is

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1. McIver, *THE COMMUNITY*, pp.434-35.

2. Hoyland, *HISTORY AS DIRECTION*, pp.9 and 21.

true that no two individuals are so identical that they cannot be distinguished. No two Indians are so identical in their culture-traits that the one cannot be distinguished from the other. Nevertheless, it is said that the individuals of a culture-group have so much of culture-pattern in common that each represents all. They are like grains of wheat; each is a sample of the whole. Every Indian has Indian culture and represents it; every American has American culture and is like other Americans; and every Baiga has Baiga culture and is a sample of it.

Seba Eldridge speaks of "the intimate relationship between the individual and the group, one might also say, their complete identity", and adds, "a group is nothing more than its members related and co-operating in certain ways, while the individual is made what he happens to be, very largely, by the group relationships and activities into which he enters. The individual makes the group, and the group makes or remakes the individual".<sup>1</sup> "In all phases of life, the individual adapts himself to the social heritage of the group into which he is born. The culture of that group is the basis of his behaviour . . . . That explains why the New York boy eats with his fork and not with chopsticks; why he reads the Bible and not the Koran; why he speaks English and not Chinese; why he dances the Charleston and not the sun dances. So on, *ad infinitum*".<sup>2</sup> "Thus, as individuals, we are born into a group, acquire its civilization, learn how to respond to it, adjust ourselves to it, and eventually reach the point where any opposite response is accompanied by strong feeling. This applies to all social groups. The individuals in each become conditioned to their culture, just as in our own society we become condi-

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1. Davis and Barnes, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY, pp.604-5.

2. Ibid. p.551.

tioned to ours. Our antagonism against the foreigner is often nothing more than the emotional reaction against the individual who is adjusted (acculturated) to the civilization of another culture-area, and who consequently stands out as markedly different from ourselves in behaviour and ways of doing things. He is adjusted to a different pattern; his has been a different social heritage; his habit reactions are different from our own; hence the antagonism".<sup>1</sup> The intimate relationship, amounting almost to identity, between the individual and his culture-group is considered by Seba Eldridge as "perhaps the most basic fact in the whole realm of sociology".<sup>2</sup>

### **7. Unevenness of Pattern**

Notwithstanding the postulate of the identity of the individual with his group, it is not insisted that the individuals of the group are wholly identical in every detail of the culture-pattern or that culture areas are sharply marked off from one another. It is not insisted that Maharastrian culture, for instance, is developed uniformly in quality and quantity in all Maharastrians so as to make them altogether undistinguishable. Nor is the Maharastrian culture-area sharply demarcated from the Gujarati culture-area. In the "marginal areas" and the "marginal" individuals, Maharastrian culture shades off, as it were, into the Gujarati. All the traits of a culture are not equally developed in all places and in all its constituent members. Basically, however, it is so uniform that it can be treated as a unit, distinguishable from its neighbours. As Giddings puts it, "individuals resemble one another when their differences are less than the limiting differences."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid p.552.

2. Davies and BARNES, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY p. 604.

3. Giddings, THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF SOCIETY, p. 59-60

## 8. Moral Values of Cultures

Moral values have been attributed to a culture as to a personality. We have already noted that Mahatma Gandhi called Western civilization materialistic and as representing forces of evil and darkness and the Eastern spiritual, that Radhakrishnan said that the former was intellectual and the latter spiritual and that Tagore thought that the former had singular strength of moral conduct, which was a great inspiration to all. We have also noted that Huntington thought that Western civilization was superior to the Eastern, while Rene Guenon took a contrary view and that Elwin thought that civilization was bad for the aborigines.

Hoyland, who accepts Spengler's scheme of nine cultures, postulates that each is distinguished from the others by its emphasis on one of six dynamic qualities, or Thrusts, as he calls them: goodness, beauty, truth, self-sacrifice, freedom and religion. All the thrusts are present in all the cultures, but each thrust has a different emphasis in each culture. For instance, the thrust of freedom has distinctive manifestation in each of the cultures. In the Chinese culture, it is "patriarchal undisturbedness"; in the Indian, it is the "state of mind which has conquered desire"; in the Arabian, it is "right belief and right action relatively to the ultimate truth"; in the classical, it is "guarantee against tyranny" and in the Western, it is "the possession of the means for the abundant life."<sup>1</sup>

It will thus be seen that cultures have been treated as personalities, that each culture, consisting of individuals sharing a culture pattern, is credited with moral character and social behaviour, is evaluated and graded. The aggregates of human beings called the Orientals, the Occidentals,

1. Hoyland, HISTORY AS DIRECTION, p. 57-63.



the Chinese, the Indians, the Negroes, the aborigines, the Bengalees and the Goans are each treated as a personality and given a character and a behaviour, some flattering and some otherwise.

## 9. Static vs. Dynamic Culture

Culture is dynamic, but not necessarily all cultures. It is said that the so-called primitive cultures are not dynamic or only slightly so, whereas advanced civilizations are strikingly dynamic. The rate of change varies from "the almost imperceptible change in small and primitive society to the rapidity that characterises our own" says Wiley.<sup>1</sup> Primitive societies are small and isolated and had adjusted themselves to their immediate physical and social environments which had remained static, and where in a state of static equilibrium. For this reason "the primitive group is in the main strikingly homogenous from the cultural standpoint. A great number of individuals within the group know and feel, and do or can do the same things.... The individual is but a miniature reproduction of the group culture, and the latter but the magnified version of the knowledge, behaviour and attitudes of the individual. Any conspicuous digression on the part of the individual from the set form of thought and action is resented and repressed."<sup>2</sup> Primitive cultures are, therefore, static. Advanced cultures are said to be dynamic and their rates of change to be rapid.

## 10. Invention & Diffusion

How are changes brought about? How did culture originate at all? "Invention", as Dixon said, "lies at the

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1. Davis and Barnes, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY, p, 557.

2. Goldenweiser, EARLY CIVILIZATION. pp. 404-405.

very basis of the origins of culture.”<sup>1</sup> But “a discovery or invention, once made, is without result and sterile unless it is adopted. Without its diffusion beyond the discoverer or inventor the new trait remains a merely personal eccentricity, interesting or amusing, but not significant.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, invention and diffusion are the essential factors for the development of cultures.

## 11. Cultural Determinism

How do new inventions affect a culture? A culture has been stated to be a culture-pattern with “a constant degree of relative homogeneity, not only in area but also in age.”<sup>3</sup> A culture is known by its constants, but a change tends to disturb the pattern. The contradiction is reconciled by postulating that *change is limited by the pattern*. “Every new trait,” says “Wissler, that is offered must find something to fit into or it will be repulsed.”<sup>4</sup> He says that the pattern of Western civilization, which was set in the paleolithic times, had governed its subsequent development with “an iron hand.”<sup>5</sup> Roy says that Indian civilization did not allow any of its essential traits to be submerged by any exotic element with all its advertised fascination.<sup>6</sup> The existing pattern is said to limit future development, which amounts to cultural determinism.

## 12. Individual Origin of Inventions

If invention and diffusion are basic to the development of cultures, how are inventions made and how do they

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1. Dixon, THE BUILDING OF CULTURE, p. 3.
  2. Ibid. p. 59.
  3. Pitt-Rivers, THE CLASH OF CULTURES AND THE CONTACT OF RACES, p.
  4. Wissler, MAN AND CULTURE, p. 237.
  5. Ibid. p. 237.
  6. Roy, THE SPIRIT OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION, p. 42.

diffuse? "A new discovery or inventions," as Dixon says "is, in the vast majority of cases, made by an individual."<sup>1</sup> "It takes but little time," says Goldenweiser, "to realise that the changes in civilization are each and all due to the emergence of new things, inventions, ideas, which, in the last analysis, are always the emanations of the minds of individuals."<sup>2</sup>

If invention is basic to culture change, "genius is basic to all invention."<sup>3</sup> Geniuses vary in degree from attainments but little above the average to great geniuses of all time. "A man of genius," says Hankins, "is a biological accident. He is a fortuitous, unlikely combination."<sup>4</sup> He goes on to say that the higher ranges of human genius appear much less frequently than one in a million."<sup>5</sup> It would follow that genius is not a group character, and inventions are not emanations of groups, but of individuals, who are deviations from the average.

Of the relative significance of invention and diffusion, Toynbee says, "One of these alternative means is original creation, since without creation the diffusion of the products of creation is impossible *ex-hypothesi*. At the same time, it is not admissible to ascribe every acquisition of every quality of every representative of every species to a separate and original creative act, since our empirical observation shows that, in any species, the creative individuals are in a minority, and in the life of any creative individual his creative acts are rare events. Diffusion is the means by which acquisitions are actually made in many cases, and perhaps in the majority."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Dixon, THE BUILDING OF CULTURE p. 59.

2. Goldenweiser, EARLY CIVILIZATION, p. 15.

3. Dixon, THE BUILDING OF CULTURE, p. 39.

4. Hankins, THE RACIAL BASIS OF CIVILIZATION, p. 373.

5. Ibid, p. 306.

6. Toynbee, THE STUDY OF HISTORY, Vol. I, p. 426.

Cultures develop by the accumulations of new inventions made by individuals in their creative moments and by the diffusion of such inventions to others, the imitators. Nobody is born into a culture-vacuum, and nobody, not even the greatest inventor, ever invented the whole of his cultural *milieu*. Most of it is his social inheritance from others in the past. He may add to it by his own inventions. "The individual," says Goldenweiser, "is responsible for the new. Society provides the background and the occasion. For the new is never more than a ripple on the deep foundations of the old and the established."<sup>1</sup>

### 13. Internal Growth and External Diffusion

It has been said that inventions are the creations of individuals and that they spread by imitation by others. A distinction is sometimes made between imitation by members of the same group as the inventor and by members of another group. The former is often called "growth from within" and the latter "diffusion from without." "Cultures, whether modern or primitive," says Goldenweiser, "derive stimulation from growth and development from within itself and from other cultures with which it comes in contact."<sup>2</sup> The inventions made by the "constituent individuals" of a group are said as *indigeneous* to that group and *foreign* to another group.

The rationale of this distinction is thus explained by Goldenweiser: "Ideas and customs that come from another group may be totally rejected, or, as indicated before, they may either remain essentially foreign to the new medium or become partially or thoroughly assimilated. These ideas and customs are first produced by individuals or groups of

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1. Goldenweiser, EARLY CIVILIZATION, p. 18.

2. Goldenweiser, EARLY CIVILIZATION p. 117.

individuals, and spread through the cultural area by a more or less rapid process of diffusion. Now, all these traits apply also to ideas and customs which spring up within the group. They also may be rejected or partly or wholly assimilated; and they spread in essentially the same way. The mechanism and psychology of the processes are strikingly similar. Of course, there is an important difference; the ideas and customs of indigeneous origin are more likely to prove acceptable and become assimilated than those coming from without. This is obviously due to the fact that the ideas and customs that spring from within a culture are in part determined by that culture, while those that come from without are independent of the recipient cultural medium. The main difference, then, seems to lie, not in the processes of moulding and assimilation to which the two sets of ideas and customs are subjected in a cultural medium, but to the fact that the range and character of the two sets of ideas and customs are to a greater or less extent different. Clearly, also, this difference will be less, the greater the similarity between the two cultures in contact." This difference in the diffusibility of indigenous and foreign cultures is said to be the basis of the immigration laws of the U. S. A. which "tend to favour immigrants from the northern European countries and discriminate against the southern and central Europeans. The former have a culture more nearly like that found in the United States—they really are but a slight variant within the Euro-American group. The latter represent a far greater divergence from the type."<sup>2</sup>

1. Ibid. pp. 323-4.

2. Davis and Barnes, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY, p. 553.

## 14. Social Origin of Inventions

Though it is admitted that cultural inventions are the creations of individuals, they are nevertheless attributed to the groups to which the inventors are said to belong. Inventions are said to have both *an individual and a social origin*. The electric lamp, for instance, is not only the invention of Edison, but also of America; it is said to be an American invention. Since the individual, says Turner, "develops from infancy to adulthood, the capacity to innovate works always in terms of cultural materials transmitted to him by his elders; thus his innovations are quite as much social as individual products."<sup>1</sup> At the Jubilee Session of the Indian Science Congress in 1937, Sir James Jeans spoke of the "phenomenal growth of India as a scientific nation" because of the scientific work of Indians like Sir C. V. Raman.

"It is obvious," said Hankins, "that of two groups much alike otherwise, one might occasionally produce men of the rank of Newton, Darwin, Goethe, Wagner or Pasteur, and the other never.... In the long run one would produce cultural levels which the other could only imitate."<sup>2</sup> Here it is claimed that a genius and his work are also a *social* product.

## 15. Diffusion from Group to Group

Though it is admitted that an invention diffuses from its creator to other individuals, it is nevertheless claimed that diffusion is from group to group. Ralf Turner defines diffusion as the passing of culture from "one group to another;" Wiley speaks of culture as "originated by some group, conserved by some group and passed on by some

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1. Turner, THE GREAT CULTURAL TRADITIONS, p. 15.

2. Hankins, THE RACIAL BASIS OF CIVILIZATION, p. 306.

group to its descendants." Sir James Frazer speaks of the elements of culture which "a race had independently evolved" and those which "it had derived from other races." He takes a race as the social unit. Hooten says that "every civilization grows by borrowings from other cultures."<sup>3</sup>

This follows the thesis of the identity of the individual with his group; his inventions are the inventions of his group; and diffusion is from group to group. The individual is merged in his group both for creation and imitation.

## 16. Summary

We may now summarise the current concepts of cultures referred to the previous sections. The inhabited surface of the earth is pictured as a mosaic of culture-areas; each area is the homeland of a culture; each culture has a number of culture-traits which are integrated together to form an enduring culture-pattern, which is an organic unit, a "culture-organism" as it were. Each culture-pattern is distinguished from others by the unique combination of its culture-traits, including the psychological ones. Each culture has its life-cycle of birth, growth and death.

Cultures develop by the invention and diffusion and accumulation of new culture-traits. Each culture-trait is invented by an individual, who is a genius of some kind, and is therefore a deviation from the average of his group. The invention becomes social when it diffuses to others. The invention of a member of a group is indigenous to that group and spreads to members of that group by "inward growth." It is foreign to members of another group, and spreads to them by "diffusion." Indigenous inventions stand a much better chance of acceptance than foreign ones.

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3. Hooten, UP FROM THE APE, 592.

In both cases the acceptance of a new trait is limited by the existing pattern.

The constituent individuals of a culture-group are in intimate relations with the group, and are identified with it, so much so that each individual is but a miniature replica of the group. The individual is merged in his group. Hence, the inventions of an individual are the inventions of his group. Hence also diffusion is from group to group.

When two or more groups come into contact, they may or may not influence one another. The diffusion, if any, may be partial or complete. Or, the cultures may conflict.

This concept has given rise to the problem of consciously directing and controlling acculturation in order to promote harmony and discourage conflict. To this end various solutions have been propounded. But, as in the case of the diagnosis, the prescriptions also have been various and sometimes conflicting.



## Chapter V

### ARE THE CURRENT CONCEPTS VALID?

#### I. East and West

Having described some of the current concepts of civilizations, we may now proceed to consider if all or any of them are valid and true, and if they offer any clear guidance for your conduct and mine. Is it, for instance, valid to speak of an eastern and a western civilization, of a primitive and an advanced civilization, of a white and a black civilization, and attribute a culture-pattern to each of them and prescribe a course of conduct for one culture towards another?

Let us first take the much-discussed pair of opposites, eastern and western civilizations, and enquire of each its culture-area, its culture-group and its culture-pattern. Let us enquire how the two civilizations came to be qualified by the words *eastern* and *western*. Primarily, they point to the cardinal points of the compass; east points to the direction of the rising sun, and west of the setting sun. But it makes no sense to speak of a sun-rise civilization and sun-set civilization. Further, we are no wiser as to how we should behave towards either. In any event, the sun rises and sets on you and me every morning and evening. Have we an eastern culture in the morning and a western culture in the evening? The terms by themselves do not indicate the pattern of the cultures they distinguish, except to suggest a diametrical contrast between the two.

Very often not only laymen but also social scientists, trained to more accurate use of words, use the terms *western*

civilization *modern* civilization, *European* civilization and *white* civilization as synonymous. Ruth Benedict, in her PATTERNS OF CULTURE, uses the four qualifying terms as synonymous. Wiley, for instance, identifies *white* civilization with *western* civilization.<sup>1</sup>

Now whatever *western* may mean as qualifying a civilization, *European* has a geographical connotation, namely, Europe; *white* has a racial implication, the Caucasian; and *modern* refers to the time factor. Western Civilization is thus the civilization of the white people of Europe in modern times. And, by contrast, Eastern civilization is that of the non-white people of areas other than Europe in ancient times. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi himself called western civilization of Europe as modern and contrasted it with the ancient, i. e. Indian civilization.

If the civilization of Europe in modern times is western, what was it in ancient times? Was it eastern? If we date modern civilization of Europe at about 1750, what was it before that date? If the alternative to western civilization is eastern, then the civilization of Europe before 1750 must have been eastern! Yet, it seems a contradiction to speak of the civilization of Europe being eastern till 1750, and to have become subsequently western. Western civilization is said to be much older than 1750; in fact, Wissler said that civilization suffered a schism into eastern and western at its dawn in the paleolithic times, and that each civilization persisted from that day to this day with its pattern intact. The civilization of Europe has been western right through and not only in modern times.

Similarly, if the civilization of Asia was eastern in ancient

1. Davis and Barnes, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY  
p. 546-47.

times, what is it in modern times? Is it western? Nothing can stop the march of time. And if lapse of time makes a civilization change from eastern to western, the same time-effect was present both in Europe and in Asia. And the question of Eastern civilization resisting westernisation does not arise.!

The culture-area of Western civilization was Europe in ancient days but now it is said to include not only Europe, but also Canada, the United States of America, Australia, parts of New Zealand and South Africa. Australia and New Zealand, though to the south-east of India, are said to have western civilization, while China, which is to the north-east of India, has eastern civilization! Neither geographical situation nor the period of time signify western civilization. The common factor is "white", the Caucasian. It is the civilization of the whites, wherever they have been, in any geographical area, Europe, Asia, Africa, or Americas, and at any period of time, ancient or modern. Western civilization is *white* civilization, a factor of race.

Race is biological factor and not a cultural one. If civilization is a function of race, it cannot be transmitted except by biological miscegenation, and even then only on Mendelian principles. There could not have been diffusion of culture from the Americans to the Japanese, as is claimed there has been; Western Christianity and radios could not have spread to the African heathens, or Asiatic pagans, as it is undoubtedly spreading. An individual does not change his racial characters by acquiring a different culture. As Ruth Benedict said, "Culture is not a biologically transmitted complex." Franz Boas came to the deliberate conclusion of the "independence of race and culture."

## **2. Culture-Pattern of East & West**

What is the culture-pattern of Western civilization and of Eastern civilization?

Mahatma Gandhi said that modern western civilization represented forces of "evil and darkness" whereas the "ancient, i. e. Indian" civilization represented "in its essence divine force". The former was chiefly "materialistic" as "ours" is chiefly spiritual. "Modern civilization occupies itself with the investigation of the laws of matter, and employs human ingenuity in inventing or discovering means of production and weapons of destruction; ours is chiefly occupied in exploring spiritual laws."<sup>1</sup> Sir Radhakrishnan said that Eastern culture was "spiritual" while the Western was "intellectual", and the two were complementary.<sup>2</sup> "The Chinese and the Hindu civilizations are not great in the high qualities which have made the youthful nations of the West the dynamic forces they have been on the arena of world history, the qualities of ambition and adventure, of nobility and courage, of public spirit and social enthusiasm . . . While the Western races crave for freedom even at the price of conflict, the Eastern cling to peace even at the risk of subjection . . . . The qualities associated with the Eastern cultures make for life and stability; those characteristic of the west for progress and adventure."<sup>3</sup> To Kunhi Kanan the most fundamental difference between the two civilizations lay in the fact that the governing principle in the West was Right, while it was Duty in the East. They were not mutually exclusive in either but the difference lay in the emphasis.<sup>4</sup> Further, "the civilization of the East has always been "rural" while that of the west was "urban." "If there is any single idea" said Roy, "that can adequately represent India, it is mysticism."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Gandhi, TO THE STUDENTS, p. 48.

2. Radhakrishnan, EAST & WEST IN RELIGION, p. 43.

3. Radhakrishnan, EASTERN RELIGION & WESTERN THOUGHT, pp. 257-8.

4. Kunhi Kanan, THE WEST, p. 306.

5. Ibid, p. 318.

6. Roy, THE SPIRIT OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION, p. 72.

Prof. Wiley said that western civilization was fundamentally Christian, highly mechanised, nationalistic and commonly democratic.<sup>1</sup> Prof. Barnes contrasted the “mechanical, highly artificial, machine-made, money-chasing civilization of the west” with the “more mystical, idealistic and individualistic culture of the Orient.”<sup>2</sup> Prof. Wissler thought that “mechanical invention, mass education and universal suffrage” were characteristic of western civilization.<sup>3</sup> “Industrialization and democracy, rather industrialisation and nationalism, are” said Prof. Toynbee, “the two forces which have exercised dominion *de facto* over our Western society in our age.” Dr. George Sarton, the historian of Science, thought that the “essential difference between East and West is that the latter overcame scholasticism, while the former did not”; the west understood and practised the “experimental method.” Mrs. Joachim Dage accused the Nazi attitude towards women as being “reactionary and Oriental” because it sought to “orientalise” German women by running counter to the women’s emancipation movement.<sup>3a</sup> When Lord Minto urged that “the doctrines of the western world” were quite unsuited to the East, Lord Morley asserted that the British were in India “to implant, slowly, prudently, judiciously, those ideas of justice, law and humanity which are the foundations of our own civilization”.<sup>4</sup> Sir Valentine Chirol said that the west had evolved democracy, which was incompatible with “Oriental forms of society and government,” and he thought that “what the Orient chiefly lacks and had always lacked, was the practice of freedom with the

1. Davis and Barnes, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY, p. 546

2. Ibid, p. 172-3.

3. Wissler, MAN AND CULTURE, p. 5.

3a. NEW YORK TIMES, p. 1 July 1935.

4. Lady Minto, MINTO & MORLEY, p. 250.

sense of responsibility, or, in other words, character." Mr. O'Malley distinguished between the "Indigenous civilization of India which was "essentially static" from the progressive civilization of the West."<sup>2</sup> He observed that Western culture was characterised by "three things: the Christian ethic, the rule of law, and the conquest of nature by science."<sup>3</sup> He noted that India had a civilization "which refuses to be extinguished by a (western) alien civilization which was fundamentally alien to its ideas."<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Hu Shih said that the difference between the East and West was due to the early difference "in intellectual pursuit and endeavour"; while the early Greeks were pursuing such interests as mathematics, geometry and mechanics, the Chinese were evolving moral and political philosophies and the Indians were elaborating great religions.<sup>5</sup>

An analysis of the foregoing and other illustrative statements shows that the differences between the culture patterns extend over a very wide range: the religious, the ethical, the political, the social, the economic, the educational, the artistic, etc. Western civilization is Christian, humanitarian, rational, scientific, democratic, industrial, progressive, dynamic and mechanical, while Eastern civilization is the opposite. These culture-traits are "the constants which persist in spite of changes."<sup>6</sup>

We may now examine if, and to what extent, these culture-traits have been the constants of the culture-pattern of the West and of the East in age and area, in time and in

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1. Chirol, THE OCCIDENT AND THE ORIENT, p. 207.
  2. O'Malley, MODERN INDIA AND THE WEST, p. 763-4.
  3. O'Malley, MODERN INDIA AND THE WEST, p. 806.
  4. Ibid, p, 810.
  5. Hu Shih, THE CHINESE RENAISSANCE, p. 65.
  6. O'Malley, MODERN INDIA AND THE WEST, p. ix.

space, and what the attitude of members of one culture should be towards the other culture, of the East towards the West and *vice-versa*.

### 3. Christianity

Has Christianity been a constant trait of western civilization? And does it distinguish it from the Eastern? H. G. Wood claimed that there was a real unity of western civilization, and that it was based on "the spiritual civilization of the Greek, the Roman, the Jew and the Christian."<sup>1</sup> The Greek, the Roman and Jewish civilizations pre-dated the Christian. Western civilization is older than Christianity; it was there long before Christianity was born. Western civilization was "pagan" before the rise and spread of Christianity.

If origin is the criterion, Christianity was born in the Orient, in Palestine. Christ, himself was a Jew, an Oriental, and was born in the Orient. He preached his religion in the Orient, and Christianity spread first in the Orient, including South Indies, and later in the occident.

Further, it is not exclusive to the West. Millions of Orientals are Christians. Also, it is not organically associated with other traits of Western Civilization. It is not linked with any particular political economic, scientific, artistic or other traits found in western civilization. Christianity is not organically associated with democracy; Christian states have not been uniformly democratic in time or space; they have varied from democracies to aristocracies, dictatorships and imperialisms. Christianity is not associated with rural or urban economy exclusively, nor with capitalism or communism, tariffs or free trade. It is not associated with science, for science was sometimes discouraged, and scientists were persecuted.

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1. Marvin, UNITY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION, p. 280.

Christianity has not been a vital and constant trait of an organic whole called western civilization; it was not co-extensive and co-termical in area nor co-eval in age with Western culture. It is an independent culture-trait with independent diffusion. Created by an individual, Jesus Christ, in a particular place, Palestine, some 2,000 years ago, it spread from him to other individuals, who were very few in number at the start and gradually increased in number as time passed, and in all directions from the point of origin, east, west, north and south, to Asia, to Europe, to Africa and other parts of the world. Its spread was not uniform in speed or direction or intensity. Since its birth, it divided humanity into two exclusive groups, the Christian and the non-Christian, not western and eastern. The two groups are different for that single trait only, namely, Christianity. Christianity has all along been welcomed by some individuals, opposed by some others, while others still were indifferent.

#### **4. Science in East & West**

Is science a constant trait of the pattern of Western civilization? Let us see what George Sarton, the historian of science, has to say on the subject. "There is no doubt," he says, "that our earliest scientific knowledge is of oriental origin."<sup>1</sup> "The spirit of Greek science which accomplished such wonders within a period of about five centuries was essentially the western spirit, whose triumphs are the boast of modern scientists. But we must bear in mind two important qualifications. First, that the foundations of that Greek science were wholly Oriental, and however deep the Greek genius, it is not certain that it could have built anything comparable to its actual achievements without these

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1. Sarton, THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND THE NEW HUMANISM; p. 81.



foundations.”<sup>1</sup> “The seeds of science, including the experimental method and mathematics, in fact, the seeds of all forms of science came from the East and during the Middle Ages they were largely developed by the Eastern peoples.”<sup>2</sup>

As regards development of science, Sarton says, “In the Middle Ages the difference between the East and West was not very great . . . Until the sixteenth century (included) there is good reason to consider both Eastern and Western developments, but after that time Western science began to grow at accelerated pace, while Eastern civilization remained at a standstill or even deteriorated.”<sup>3</sup> In modern times, “Japan is becoming more and more a part of the West, so far as the intellectual mission of mankind is concerned. On the contrary, some European nations, which prefer argument to experiment, and orientalised, I mean immobilised, to that extent. The great intellectual division of mankind is not along geographic or racial lines, but between those who understand and who do not practise.”<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Hu Shih said that the Chinese philosophers had the “scientific spirit” but not the method in the twelfth century but had found the method also in the seventeenth which produced the “age of scientific research in the humanities and historical studies in the last three hundred years,” and the Chinese realised recently that the “so called procedure of science is, after all, not so alien and strange to the Chinese intellectual tradition.”<sup>5</sup> He expressed gratification with the scientific achievements of the Chinese during the last twenty

1. Sarton, THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND THE NEW HUMANISM. p. 89.
2. Ibid, p. 119.
3. Sarton, INTRODUCTION TO SCIENCE, Vol. I., p. 28.
4. Ibid. p. 29.
5. Hu Shih, THE CHINESE RENAISSANCE, p. 67-77.

years. Sir James Jeans paid tribute to the development of India as a scientific nation in contemporary times.

It would seem, then, that science has not been a vital organic . . . . . and exclusive trait of western civilization. Science, too, has not been co-extensive, coterminal and co-eval with western civilization. There seems to be no correlation between the two.

Science and superstition co-exist in the same culture, whether western or eastern. They co-exist in the same person. Sir James Fraser wrote: "I suppose that Newton was the greatest scientific genius who ever lived; but he wrote drivelling nonsense about prophecy and the book of Revelations. Faraday, another scientific genius of the first order, was a Sandemanian. A. R. Wallace, Crooks and Lodge dabble in the nonsense of spiritualism. Mankind from top to bottom is riddled with such inconsistencies".<sup>1</sup>

Granting that science is western, should the East reject it on the ground that it is foreign and not indigenous, that it was not due to "inward growth" but to "diffusion from without"? Should India accept the inventions of Sir J. C. Bose and Sir C. V. Raman on the ground that they are indigenous and reject penicillin and D. D. T. because they are foreign ?

## **5. Government in East and West**

Is democracy characteristic of the West and autocracy of the East? It is hardly necessary to ask that question today. Before the Second Great War, several states in Europe were far from being democratic. Dictatorships ruled in Russia, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Greece,

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1. Pitt-Rivers, CLASH OF CULTURES AND CONTACT OF RACES, p. 161.

Lithuania, Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia, Spain and Austria. Freedom of speech, of opinion, of the press and of voting had been restricted. The methods adopted by the dictators included political murders, purges and liquidations, recalling those of “mediaeval despotisms” of Europe.

Forms of government had their vicissitudes. According to some historians, “the power of mediaeval kings was not absolute—they were limited by feudalism, danger of rebellion, occasional elections, by charters and by parliaments. Now we are to see that between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries a great change took place—limited monarchy grew, in many countries, into autocracy or unlimited monarchy. Here and there, during Middle Ages in Europe, it looked as if democracy had about an even chance with monarchy; but, as it turned out, democracy had to stand aside, in most countries, for monarchy to have its day”.<sup>1</sup> Further, “in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries autocracy flowered on the continent of Europe, that is, it reached a full and brilliant stage of development”.<sup>2</sup>

Lord Bryce defined democracy as “nothing more or less than the rule of the whole people expressing their sovereign will by their votes”.<sup>3</sup> According to that definition “a century ago, except in Switzerland, no where else did the people rule. Britain enjoyed far wider freedom than any part of the European continent, but her local as well as central government was still oligarchic”.<sup>4</sup> Manhood-franchise was adopted in England in 1918 and the franchise was extended to women in 1928.

1. Hayes, Moon and Wayland, *WORLD HISTORY*, p. 442.
2. *Ibid*, p. 441-4 *Ibid* p. 3.
3. Bryce, *MODERN DEMOCRACIES*, Vol. I, p. viii
4. *Ibid*. p. 3.

Democracy and autocracy have each a history ; there is no correlation between democracy and western civilization, between autocracy and oriental culture.

## **6. Industrialism**

Another culture trait attributed to western culture is industrialism. Is this a culture-trait peculiar to western culture? The birth of industrialism is generally dated in 1770, about which time James Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny, Richard Arkwright invented the water-frame and Samuel Crompton combined the two to form the "mule" and James Watt invented the steam-engine. Now, western civilization did not begin in 1770. It lasted many centuries without industrialism. Even when industrialism was born, it did not characterise the whole of western civilization. It was born near about Manchester in England, and from there it gradually spread to other areas like France, Belgium and the U.S.A. by 1840, and to most European countries by 1860 and since them to other areas in the world, like Japan, China, India and Africa. It is spreading still. Today there is a great urge in India to intensify industrialism.

Industrialism spread gradually from the point of origin to other and wider areas, and from the few inventors to the many imitators. It is not correlated with western civilization or with traits like Christianity, democracy, divorce, cricket or franchise for women. It is not co-extensive, co-terminal and co-eval with western civilization.

Is industrialism good for the west because it is said to be indigenous to it, and bad for the east because it is said to be foreign to it? Should the west accept it and east reject it? Industrialism has its good and its bad points which are recognised by some people in the east and in the west. The

group of people who welcome industrialism does not coincide with the western group, and the group which deplors it with the eastern group. They cut across.

## 7. Status of Women

Is it a cultural-trait of western civilization that women are free and have equal status with men? Was it so among all the peoples of the culture-area of the West and during all the time that it has been western civilization? A glance at the history of the status of women in Europe during the ages will show that this was not so. Among the Greeks the position of women was one of subordination to men. Their function was to serve and to amuse their men. Among the Romans it was no other. "Our fathers," says the elder Cato "have willed that women should be in the power of their fathers, of their brothers, of their husbands." Christianity reiterated the Roman tradition. "Wives," it enjoined, "submit yourselves unto your husbands as unto the Lord." Ecclesiastical law authorised a man to enforce obedience from his wife by beating her with "whips and cudgels."<sup>1</sup> According to the law of *Patria Potestas* "women were in perpetual legal tutelage ... They had no rights of citizenship, bear no legal witness, not choose their own domicile. Their husbands were their proprietors",<sup>2</sup> "From the thirteenth century, when the Church completed a despotic power over European life, the position of women steadily worsened".<sup>3</sup> "It was far lower than the one she held in the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Hitite and in the later stages, the Greco-Roman civilization."<sup>4</sup> "By the time of the Reformation

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1. Schmalhausen and Calverton, WOMEN'S COMING OF AGE, pp. 5-6.
  2. Winifred Holtby, WOMEN, p. 20.
  3. Schmalhausen and Calverton, WOMEN'S COMING OF AGE, p. 59.
  4. Ibid, p. 61.

woman were treated in law with all the insulting disabilities and inequalities which Protestants were no more willing to relieve than Catholics".<sup>1</sup> The Puritans, who considered pleasure was sin, stigmatised women as the source of sin and instruments of evil, and the attitude persisted for centuries. It was only after the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution that the movement for the emancipation of women began and is not yet complete anywhere. At the beginning of the nineteenth century almost every woman in the West was, legally, a mere adjunct of some man, father, guardian or husband; she had no legal personality of her own. It would appear that when, in 1846, the great world anti-Slavery Convention was held in London, four women were among the delegates from America. "The Convention was outraged and declared the "innovation" to be "subversive of the principles and traditions of the country and contrary to the word of God."<sup>2</sup> The movement towards equality of women with men gained considerable strength during the World War I and World War II. Since 1918 about fourteen States in Europe have enacted laws giving some form of equality of rights between men and women. Since then in Germany and Italy under Hitler and Mussolini there was a reaction. In the meanwhile, the movement spread to other countries in the world, including the East, particularly Turkey, India, China, etc. In Burma women have had equality for a long time. The march of women's movement has not been "regular, constant nor universal. It advances in one place, while it retreats in others."<sup>3</sup> On the 1st of March 1935, seventeen women took their seats in the Turkish Parliament, while the women in France had not yet

1. Ibid, p. 60.

2. Holtby, WOMEN, p. 46.

3. Ibid, p. 182.

got the vote. Freedom of women is, thus, not part and parcel of western civilization.

Granting that women have all along had equal rights with men in the West, should the East insist on the subordination of women as an indigenous culture-trait and resist equality as an exotic importation?

## 8. Dynamic West

Another culture trait attributed to the West is that it is dynamic, while the East is static. Is this true? And has it been so? Toynbee thought that "Unchanging East" was a catchword which "collapses at a touch." He exclaimed: "We are left wondering how this vulgar error can ever have obtained its hold."<sup>3</sup> He pictures the experience of a citizen of Bagdad who had learnt from archeological investigations something of its ancient civilization and who subsequently visits modern Switzerland. There he observes "with astonishment and delight that the pastoral life with which he is familiar from the books about the ancient lake-dwellers (of his country) . . . is being lived, apparently unchanged, by the Swiss herdsmen of today! How different from Iraq, where the disinterred vestiges of Ur and Babylon and Ninevah proclaim to any Bagdadi who sets eyes on them that in his country life is afflux, and history a synonym for Change. And now the Bagdadi has discovered the "Unchanging West."<sup>1</sup> At the present time, says Stoddard "throughout its huge length and breadth Asia writhes in *utter revolution* . . . This prodigious transformation is more sudden, more intense, and above all more complex than anything the West has ever known."<sup>2</sup>

1. Toynbee, THE STUDY OF HISTORY, Vol. I, p. 164.
2. Toynbee, THE STUDY OF HISTORY, p. 167.
3. Stoddard, CLASHING TIDES OF COLOUR, p. 191.

Before the Industrial Revolution, all cultures were less dynamic than since. Even in modern times, all the culture-traits of a pattern, either in the West or in the East, are not equally dynamic. "The material civilization, in our own generation at least", says Wiley, "multiplies and develops at prodigious speed. The automobile changes from the crude 'horseless wagon' to a superlative twelve-cylinder affair within a few short years . . . Our customs, however, show no such rapid tendency to change. Our codes of morals are modified but slowly. We still use the ceremonies of our grand-parents. Our economic philosophy changes but little. At the same time, our scientific knowledge is increasing at an accelerated speed".<sup>1</sup>

It is not true to suggest that Western civilization is and has been dynamic, while the Eastern civilization is and has been static.

## **9. Psychological Traits**

Among the traits attributed to Western civilization are character, adventure, ambition, love of freedom, love of money, humanitarianism and materialism. Contrasting traits have been attributed to Eastern civilization. Maurice Parmelee in his book *ORIENTAL AND OCCIDENTAL CULTURE*, listed a series of such contrasting characteristics of the East and the West. So have others who have written on the subject. But Parmelee himself added that such generalisations were subject to many exceptions and qualifications. "All of the characteristics to be mentioned apply to a certain extent to both East and West. Moreover, they apply in a varying degree to the different parts of the East, which is much less united than the West, and more to India than elsewhere. They are the norms set up by thinkers and

1. Davis and Barnes, *INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY*, p. 579



leaders who influence common people in a measure. But the life of the masses the world over is much the same in that they are primarily concerned with satisfying the fundamental human wants".<sup>1</sup> Moreover, such generalisations whether the West loves freedom and the East tolerates subjection are not capable of objective appraisal; they are subjective opinions of individuals. The love of freedom does not characterise the peoples of the west consistently and constantly. Among the western peoples there have been those who love freedom and others who do not, particularly for others. Even in England freedom was won after long battle, in which both sides were westerners, Englishmen. In the French Revolution the people on either side were westerners, Frenchmen. In the present World War II, there are easterners and westerners on both sides of the war: Germany and Italy against the U. S. A. and England and Russia, and Japan against China.

"It is unfortunately true" said Parmelee, "of both Eastern and Western writers that they often make wild and inaccurate generalisations when trying to compare Eastern and Western thought".<sup>2</sup> "All generalisations", said Sir Gilbert Murray, "about whole nations or group of nations are superficial and inaccurate, even when made by scientific students without personal bias. And most of these actually current are made by prejudiced and utterly unscientific partisans. People talk loosely of the difference between 'Nordic' and 'Latin' nations, or, in still loose phrase, between 'East and West', violently denouncing the one and praising the other. Even when there is no actual prejudice at work, the comparisons, though sometimes suggestive, are never exact. For one thing, neither side of the comparison

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1. Parmelee, *ORIENTAL AND OCCIDENTAL CULTURE*, p. 62  
2, *Ibid* p. 56.

is uniform; every German is different from every other German, every Italian from every other Italian; nor can you make any single statement that will be true of all Indians or of all Englishmen. . . . I am always puzzled by the people who ask me, 'Do I like Indians', or it may be Americans, or Frenchmen, and I can only answer, as I would about my own countrymen, that I like some and do not like others".<sup>1</sup>

James Truslow Adams once discussed the current notions regarding the psychological characteristics of Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Italians. "In the delightful coast-town of Amalfi, where we were staying, we commented on the gentleness, the sweetness and the friendliness of the people. Only a few miles away, up in the mountains, there was a complete and astonishing change. The inhabitants shook their clenched fists at us as our car passed; they spat on the car and threw stones. They appeared to be wholly different people, yet they and Amalphians were equally 'Italians'. Instances of such differences could be multiplied indefinitely. What peoples could be more different in many ways than the gay and boastful Gascons of the South and the reserved and dour Bretons peasants of the North? Yet we include them both under one head when we speak of "The French."<sup>2</sup>

He attempted to define the "typical American", a phrase which is very commonly used. He tried the statistical method. From the population of the U. S. A. he eliminated, as not typical, the Negroes, the Asiatics and the foreign immigrants of the first generation, who numbered forty per cent of the population. "Evidently, the validity of a conception of a national character, difficult enough to define for any nation, is rendered yet more dubious when it is based on the traits of only 60 per cent of the people." He, therefore, abandoned

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1. Murray-Tagore, *EAST AND WEST*, pp. 12-14.

2. *New York Times Magazine*, May 19, 1935.

the statistical method as unsatisfactory and tried the method of the "ideal" as held up in literature, etc. Failing that also, he tried to build up the character of the "typical" American by examining the character of men and women who were generally considered to be Simon-pure Americans. He compared the lives of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford, Thomas A. Edison, John Adams, T. P. Barnum, Calvin Coolidge, Mark Twain Abraham Lincoln and others. But the review did not distill the typical American character. Finally, he fell back on "sheer impressionism," which was however subjective and valid only for him.

When, for instance, it is said that the West is materialistic and the East spiritual or idealistic, it is impossible to test its validity. Radhakrishnan, who said that the East was spiritual and the West was intellectual, qualified the statement by saying that "The great peoples differ not so much in the presence or absence of this or that quality as in its degree and extent. The West is not devoid of mysticism and martyrdom, nor the East of science and public spirit."<sup>1</sup> But how is the relative distinction to be measured?

Psychological attitudes like love, loyalty, truthfulness, service, kindness, lawfulness and freedom are normally developed in every child and they remain with him as long as his character or personality lasts.<sup>2</sup> These are common to the whole of humanity and have no relation to eastern or western, primitive or advanced civilization, or any other division. "The emotional and intellectual traits that were supposed to differentiate different cultures have faded away upon close examination."<sup>3</sup> "We must compare," says Boas, "the code

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1. Radhakrishnan, *EAST AND WEST IN RELIGION*, p. 45.

2. Davis and Barnes, *INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY*, p. 461.

3. *Ibid.* p. 587.

of primitive ethics with our own ethics and the primitive conduct with our own conduct. It may safely be said that the code, so far as relations between members of a group are concerned, does not differ from ours.”<sup>1</sup>

## 10. Customs and Manners

The non-material part of civilization consists, among others, of customs, manners, ceremonies, habits or folk-ways. Though these are innumerable, it is hard to find any which are exclusively characteristic of the West or the East in age and area. Take, for instance, the use of the fork and knife, the adoption of which by some Indians provoked Dhirendra Nath Roy to attack them as “cultural renegades.” The use of these instruments is now common, perhaps universal, among the westerners. But it was not so sometime ago. “Table-knives do not seem to have come into general use in Europe until late in the Middle Ages, and in England the use of the fork at table was laughed at as a new-fangled curiosity as late as 1608. . . . Forks came long after knives and spoons and were long used only in cooking and holding the joint of meat while it was being carved . . . The use of the fork at the table seems to have been introduced into Europe from the Orient through Venice. A story of the 11th century tells of the wife of a Venetian ruler who was ‘luxurious beyond belief’ because, “instead of eating like other people, she had her food cut up into little pieces and ate the pieces by means of a two-pronged fork’. When the custom of using a dining fork was brought into England in 1608 by a traveller who had observed it in Italy, it caused a great deal of excitement. He was laughed at by some and railed at by others, one person declaring that it was an “insult to Providence who gave us fingers”.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Boas, *ANTHROPOLOGY AND MODERN LIFE*, p. 217.

2. *Compton's Pictured Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 8. p. 33.

An examination of the story of other customs will show that each one was invented somewhere, at some time, by some one, and it spread, but not necessarily uniformly in direction and speed. But there are hardly any customs which are co-extensive, co-terminal and co-eval with eastern or western civilization or with any other culture-trait. Each has its own biography, as it were, and is not organically linked with others to form a consistent and constant pattern in age and area.

### 11. "Westernization"

Dr. Dharendra Nath Roy vehemently condemned the "westernisation" of the East, stigmatised the "westernised" Indians as "cultural renegades" and exhorted Indians to remain true to their own culture and glory in it. What exactly is "westernization"? How is it undesirable or injurious? How should it be resisted? Roy grants that the great millions of Indians who had not received the benefits of "the present system of education" and who form the bulk of the population of India have not been "westernised", Of the minority who have been affected by that education- the great majority were merely "cultural sceptics", whose faith in Indian civilization was shaken, though they still conformed to it. He himself says that what counted in Indian civilization is conformation to tradition in behaviour and not necessarily faith in it. Since "cultural sceptics" live traditionally, though they think freely, they are not "westernised". The microscopic minority that are "westernised" are, according to him, the "Christian converts" and the "over-educated" Hindus.<sup>1</sup>

As we have already seen, Christianity is not characteristic of western civilization. It is a religion, like so many

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1. Roy. SPIRIT OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION, p. 230-40.

other religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and so on. If the place of origin is the criterion, and if countries east of Greece are Eastern, then all the great religions of the world are eastern, and in that sense indigenous to the East and not foreign to it. If spread is the criterion, Christianity spread to the East, to India and China even earlier than it spread to France and England and the U. S. A. It is not a "whiteman's" religion, for the founder was not a Caucasian, and millions of Christians today are not whites. It is not an exclusive trait of western civilization, for that civilization was there even before Christianity was born. Indian civilization has not been static in the matter of religion; new religions have been born and they have spread, as, for instance, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism. And more new religions may come into being. Roy himself claimed that the broad outlook of Indian civilization facilitated changes and that every innovation gave free impetus to growth and development. There seems to be no reason to single out Christianity as something foreign and stigmatise converts to it as "cultural renegades". Christianity, like every other religion or other cultural-trait, was invented by one individual and from the inventor it spread to other individuals in course of time. It is not western, and its adoption is not "westernization", whatever that may mean. In any event, Roy himself has admitted that many Christians who profess the Christian faith still conform to "Hindu" behaviour, and he has said that what counts in Indian civilization was behaviour and not faith !

• Roy complains that the Christian converts adopt alien ways like ball-room dancing, courtship and divorce, and eat forbidden food.<sup>1</sup> Is there any organised connection between Christianity and ball-room dancing, for instance ? Must a

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1. Ibid p. 235.

Christian necessarily dance? Do non-Christians also dance? And, in any event, is ball-room dancing western? Is it suggested that Indian civilization, whatever it may mean, is threatened by ball-room dancing?

Roy asserts that the use of the knife and fork instead of the fingers make and "over-educated" Indian a "cultural renegade." We have already seen that the fork was, if any thing, eastern in origin, and spread to the west in the eleventh century. When it was introduced in the West, it was treated as a foreign innovation from the East, laughed out and even resisted, and the innovators were branded as cultural renegades. And now Roy calls Hindus who use them as "cultural renegades," while he himself wrote his book in the English language! The spoon, the fork and the knife are neither eastern nor western: they are just instruments, each invented by somebody at some place at some time, and which spread from the individual inventors to other individuals, far or near, fast or slow. These instruments are not organically linked with Christianity or any other cultural trait; they are capable of independent diffusion from one individual to another. Any individual anywhere may adopt Christianity if it appeals to him; he need not accept it because it is indigenous, or reject it because it is foreign. Similarly, the use of the fork, knife and spoon must depend on criteria of convenience and comfort and not of eastern or western, indigenous or foreign.

Mahatma Gandhi said that Indian civilization was essentially spiritual and Western civilization materialistic and he advocated that Indian civilization should resist the Western. In the first place, what is meant by a civilization being either materialistic or spiritual? And how do we judge if the peoples of the East are spiritual and the peoples of the west materialistic? And what should the East do to

keep out materialism? If war is a sign of the materialism of the west, wars have not been unknown in the East either. War is bad both for the East and the West; it is not indigenous and therefore good for the West; it is not foreign and therefore bad for the east. War is just war anywhere and not good for any people, except perhaps those who profit by it. There is no objective warrant for the off repeated contrast between the spiritual east and the materialistic west; both attitudes are found everywhere, and nobody knows in what proportions. In any event, an individual may like or dislike war, or materialism or spiritualism. Such individuals may form a group with that trait in common, but that group will not coincide with either the East or West.

When Sir Radhakrishnan says that the East is "spiritual" and the West is "intellectual" it is difficult to accept or reject the thesis. There are spiritual and intellectual individuals everywhere, in every place and in all times, but there seems to be no objective warrant for the generalisation that the East, consisting of millions of individuals, is spiritual, and the West, consisting of millions of individuals, is intellectual. In any event, if the spiritual is characteristic of the east, it cannot diffuse to the west for if it did, it will cease to be eastern but become universal. Diffusion is possible only to a universal trait, and not to an exclusive one. What is "mine" cannot become "yours" unless it can be "ours."

There, thus seems to be no validity to the concept, now accepted almost as an axiom, that there is something like an Eastern civilization, with its culture area, Asia, with a culture-pattern, shared by all the Asiatics and peculiar to them only, and distinguished from the Western civilization, with its own culture area, and its culture-pattern, shared by all the westerners and exclusively by them during the historic period. The whole concept breaks down when exa-



mined; it has no foundation whatever, it is a superstition. The East is not a cultural unit, nor is the West; it is meaningless to speak of each having an attitude towards the other and of each culture either accepting or rejecting the other. The West is not, for instance, characterised by industrialism, democracy, science, freedom of women, war, materialism, and the East by agriculture, autocracy, superstition, subjection of women, peace and spiritualism.

## 12 The Primitive and the Civilized

Even as Dharendra Nath Roy and others would save Indian civilization from the Western, Verrier Elwin and some other anthropologists would save the so-called aboriginals and the primitive peoples from "civilization." Here again we have the theory of the organic unity of the cultures of the primitive peoples, a warning against the disastrous effects of contacts with civilization and the advocacy of a policy of isolation of the primitives in National Parks.<sup>1</sup>

Elwin avowed that in his book, *THE BAIGA*, he treated fully with things which "the Baiga have made specially their own-cult of bewar, magic, the diagnosis and cure of disease, the knowledge of the legendary past, the art of recreation, the art of love."<sup>2</sup> Let us examine some of the traits of the Baiga culture-pattern as described by Elwin. "The Baiga certainly do not believe that they will be eaten by tigers as a punishment for washing. What they do believe is that if they wash themselves with water after defecation, they may be eaten by tiger. This is one of the most particular beliefs; it comes down from the days of Nanga Baiga himself who always cleaned himself with leaves and won the heart of Thakur Doe by showing him the result. Some of the Muria and Binjiwar Baiga now use water like the Gond, but they

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1. Elwin, *THE BAIGA*. p. 515.

2. Elwin, *THE BAIGA*, p. xxvii.

admit they are inferior to the true Baiga on account of it.”<sup>1</sup> Does it follow from the theory of the organic unity of Baiga culture-pattern that cleaning with leaves, instead of with water, is a culture trait of all the Baigas, which is vital to the Baiga culture-pattern, and that its replacement with water will be disastrous to the Baigas? In what way were the Muria and Bhinjiwar Baiga, who use water like the Gonds, inferior to the true Baiga? Was the change imposed on the unwilling Baiga by Government, the Christian missionary, or the Indian politician? And should Government, “protect” the Baiga from using water instead of leaves and for that purpose keep the Baiga in cultural isolation in a National Park?

Then, Elwin says that “It is common for the Baiga to be drowned during the rains.”<sup>2</sup> Is this also a vital culture-trait of the Baiga culture-pattern, which should be protected by isolation from civilization? “It would probably, however, be safe to say,” avers Elwin, “that nowadays both men and women (among the Baigas) bathe every four or five days. ‘We used to bathe only once a year,’ Jethu told me. “Then we are full of magic.”<sup>3</sup> The change in the frequency of bathing has evidently reduced the magic of the Baigas, and Elwin tells us that magic is one of the features which are “specially their own.” Should Elwin, therefore, advocate that in order to be full of magic again, the Baiga should revert to the habit of bathing once a year?

Elwin tells us of the vital importance of the Baiga mythology to Baiga life; “the mythology of the Baiga is the central power-house of the life and energy of the tribe . . .”<sup>4</sup> He describes the several astronomical myths of the Baiga,

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1. Ibid, p. 17.

2. Ibid, p. 17.

3. Ibid, p. 7.

4. Elwin, THE BAIGA, p. 305.

not one of which, he adds "is universally believed." "The Baiga believes that the world is surrounded by clouds,—clouds above and clouds below. It is flat and round like a great *chapati* and rests on the surface of the primeval ocean where it has been fixed in place by nails driven by Nanga Baigin at the beginning of the world."<sup>1</sup> Is it suggested that this myth should be protected from exposure to scientific truth?

Magic, says Elwin, is of the utmost importance to the Baiga; it "covers every aspect of his life; without it, existence would be unbearable, lacking all spice and flavour, without vitality. It would also be extremely dangerous. For magic is a necessity in a world where nothing happens by chance, where every happening derives from some secret supernatural cause. If the milk turns sour, somewhere a witch has cast a spell upon it. If a child falls ill, some hostile spirit has attacked him. If a tiger kills a bullock, it has been sent by some enemy of the village."<sup>2</sup> In virtue of the integrity and autonomy of Baiga culture, would Elwin protect the Baiga from the "alien" knowledge that souring of milk, for instance, had nothing to do with a witch? He records that "the rigour of the witch-trial and the punishment for witchcraft has been considerably modified in recent years; I have not met anything that can match the savagery of the Middle Ages in Europe. Now and again a witch is treated with cruelty, but she generally escapes with little more than a beating."<sup>3</sup> And yet Elwin would rather tolerate a witch being given a beating than tell that she had nothing to do with souring of milk, for if he did so, he would be undermining the vital elements of Baiga culture, and the Baiga

1. Ibid, p. 330.

2. Ibid. p. 339.

3. Ibid, p. 371.

might suffer from loss of nerve, lose interest in life and die altogether!

The Baiga, says Elwin, do not believe that diseases are due to natural causes, but to witchcraft or personal hostility. "The Baiga has no conception of natural infection or contagion."<sup>1</sup> Is that also characteristic of Baiga culture? Does everybody other than a Baiga have that knowledge? As a matter of fact, nobody, nowhere and at no time was born with the knowledge of infection and contagion. Everybody who knows anything about them, learnt it from the individual who first discovered it. And from the discoverer it spread to other individuals, in course of time. If, as Elwin says, the Baiga had no conception of contagion, it only means that the knowledge did not reach them at the time he wrote, even as it did not reach millions of non-Baigas earlier, or even now. There was a time, not long ago when none, not even the greatest scientist of the day, knew anything of infection and contagion. Since the discovery of the knowledge, an increasing number of people are getting to know of it. And so will the Baiga, if they are not prevented from doing so. Would Elwin withhold the knowledge because it was not part of the Baiga culture? Was it part of any culture before its discovery?

Elwin is not however opposed to any change in the Baiga culture being promoted by the civilised. He himself makes a series of recommendations. He says that there is wide scope for economic betterment but *bewar* or shifting cultivation, should not be discouraged; special arrangements might be made for the marketing of Baiga produce, but without opening up of communications,<sup>2</sup> For, communications while facilitating trade, also import new diseases.

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1. Ibid, p. 360.

2. Elwin, THE BAIGA, p. 511.

Education something like the "Wardha Scheme," should be imparted. The dictatorship of the subordinate officials must come to an end.<sup>1</sup> The Baiga should be "freed from cheats and imposters, from oppressive landlords and money-lenders, from corrupt and rapacious officials. We may see that they get medical aid from doctors with some sense of professional integrity. If there must be schools, we may see that these teach some useful crafts like carpentry and agriculture, and not a useless literacy . . . We may guard them against adventurers who would rob them of their songs, their dances, their festivals, their laughter."<sup>2</sup> Now, are these recommendations in any way related to the unique culture-pattern of the Baiga, as, for instance, their washing habits, their myths and magic, their astronomy and witch-craft, which Elwin postulated were vital to their survival? Even the "civilised" community has to be protected from cheats and imposters, from oppressive landlords and money-lenders, from corrupt and rapacious officials from doctors without professional integrity. They, too, should be taught some useful arts and crafts and not mere literacy; they too must be permitted to enjoy their songs, dances and laughter. How is the programme for the aboriginals different from the one for the civilised; how is it related to the special cultures of the aboriginals?

Elwin starts with the thesis that the Baiga have an integrated culture-pattern, every trait of which is vital to the healthy survival of the Baiga, that their culture is different from other and alien cultures; that acculturation, particularly the imposition of the alien civilization, is disastrous to the Baiga, and that, therefore, they should be allowed to live in isolation in National Parks. He has described a great many

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1. Ibid, p. 517.

2. Elwin, THE ABORIGINALS, p. 32.

traits of the Baiga culture-pattern, including Baiga astronomy, medicine, bevar cultivation, political organisation, arts, dances, songs, social systems, jurisprudence, etc. Now, the astronomical notion of the Baiga do not tally with the latest discoveries in astronomy. Astronomy is a physical science, which is objective. It is not variable with subjective appreciation, like dances and songs or tastes. There is and can be only one astronomy, and not a Baiga and non-Baiga astronomies. Objective truth must be allowed to prevail over subjective superstition and speculations, however ancient and fascinating. The Baiga, like everybody else, should not be denied knowledge of science, pure and applied, for there can be no Baiga and non-Baiga sciences. Similarly, medicine which is applied science should not be denied to the Baiga and reserved to the non-Baiga. Particular dances, songs and festivals have not the same objective validity for all mankind; their enjoyment has subjective validity for individuals. No two persons primitive or civilized, need necessarily enjoy the same song or dance. A taste is valid only to him who enjoys it, and not to others. Nobody should be impeded from enjoying his tastes as long as it is consistent with the enjoyment by others of their tastes.

The *primitiveness* of a culture, whether ancient or contemporary, means that it has *fewer* culture traits than the "civilised", their *culture-base* is smaller than that of the civilised; even as a poor man's hut has fewer pieces of furniture than a prince's palace. Also, the proportion of rational and scientific traits to the non-rational and superstitious ones is perhaps greater in the civilized than in the primitive. The civilised is more scientific than the primitive, the latter would, for instance, attribute the souring of milk to the spell of a witch, while the former, would attribute it to bacterial action.

Every individual is born a primitive, equipped with no culture traits. Gradually, he acquires culture-traits, and more and more of them depending partly on his own individual capacity for acquiring them and partly on his access to them. The greater his capacity and the greater his access the more will he be civilised or cultured.

No culture trait is alien to any individual. Every trait is new to everybody until he acquires it. Many culture traits now in existence, such as the radio, the aeroplane, the telephone, anti-septic surgery, plastics, penicillin, were not part of any culture, primitive or civilised, some years ago; they had not been invented. Should they be forbidden to all human beings, primitive or civilised, for that reason ?

## Chapter VI

### TRUER THEORY OF CULTURE

#### 1 The Current and the Proposed Theories

We have seen that the best that we can make of the current theory is that the inhabited world consists of a mosaic of a number of separate cultures, that each culture is characterised by a unique pattern of culture-traits shared by a number of individual human beings and that it is the fundamental unit for invention and diffusion of culture. The group, whether of traits or individuals, has been taken as the unit in the study of civilization.

We have also noted that this concept of cultures is open to criticism. May we attempt to formulate a hypothesis which may be truer and less open to criticism? It is to consider that the *individual traits and the individual human beings are the fundamental units*, and not groups of individuals and culture-traits and that *individual culture-traits are invented by individual human beings and not by groups*, and *diffuse from individual to individual* and not from group to group.

An analogy may help to visualise the new concept more vividly. From a thousand radio-stations scattered all over the globe a thousand announcers are at any moment putting out news which are radiating in all directions, criss-crossing on the way, and are being received by perhaps millions of listeners all over the world. Individual announcers are putting out news and individual listeners are receiving it. The transmission is not from group to group: but from one individual announcer to perhaps millions of individual listeners.



## 2 Origin of Culture-Traits

There are no culture-traits without human beings, and no human beings without culture-traits. But each individual human being or culture-trait is an indivisible and fundamental unit, capable of independent existence and movement.

Every tool and machine, every article of food, dress or ornament, every weapon of war or peace, every custom, habit or institution, every philosophy, art or religion, is a culture-trait. A culture-trait may be material like a tool, or non-material like an idea.

Every trait was invented at least once by some one, somewhere, sometime. In the case of some traits the time, the place and the inventor are known to history; in others there is no such record. For instance, nobody knows who, when and where invented the use of fire, the wheel, writing, the cultivation of rice, the domestication of cattle and many other fundamental traits of culture. On the other hand, we know that Sir C. V. Raman discovered the "Raman Effect," that Sir J. C. Bose postulated nervous mechanism in plants, that Rabindra Nath Tagore wrote the *Gitanjali*, that Mahatma Gandhi propounded Non-violent Non-cooperation, that Thomas Edison invented the electric lamp and that Marconi invented the radio. The time and place of each of these inventions are part of recorded history.

Culture-traits may be broadly classified into those relating to food, dress, shelter, work, recreation, transportation, weapons, etc, but it is not possible to estimate, much less enumerate, the total number of culture-traits existing today in the world, because they are so many. New traits are being continuously invented and added to those already in existence, and some are dying out also. As time goes on, the

number of traits increases. It is very much larger today than it was a century ago and much larger still than five centuries ago. Culture is like a stream which, starting like a small rivulet, gathers tributaries as it flows and ultimately becomes a big river, infinitely bigger than when it started. The culture-base widens with the passing of time.

### 3. Group vs. Individual Origin

Culture-traits are invented by individuals and spread to other individuals. Nevertheless, as we have seen, some authorities hold the view that they are invented by groups and spread from group to group, as when it is said that "the first steam engines were made by Englishmen; yet the Japanese use them today,"<sup>1</sup> *that the Chinese* invented gun-powder and *Europeans* took it over; that *Indians* invented the zero in mathematics and the *Arabs* acquired it from them; and that the *Germans* invented the clock, the *Americans* invented the airplane, and so on.

When we say that the Chinese invented gun-powder, it may be because we have no more definite information about the time, place and personality of its inventor. Even as we say *man* invented the use of fire, etc., simply because we have no information which particular individual invented it and when and where. In the case of gun-powder, all that we seem to know is that somebody in China invented it but nothing more definite. But in the case of some other inventions, like the air-plane and the steam-engine, we happen to know who, when and where invented them. Nevertheless, we speak of Englishmen having invented the steam-engine, and the Japanese using it, of the Americans inventing the airplane and the British using it.

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1. Davis and Barnes, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY p. 565.

This is because of the theory of the social origin of culture-traits. In the words of Ralph Turner, the inventions of an individual are "quite as much social as individual products."<sup>1</sup> Euclid systematised geometry, Hipparchus founded trigonometry, Aristarchus proved the rotation of the earth on its axis and suggested that the earth moved round the sun, thereby anticipating Copernicus by two thousand years. Archimedes made several fundamental discoveries and inventions: the principle of the lever, of the pulley, and of specific gravity. In these instances, the names of the inventors, their places and times are known; nevertheless, the inventions are attributed to the *Greeks* as a whole; they are said to be the achievements of the *Greeks*.

In what sense are the inventions of these individuals the social products of the Greek group? What was the Greek culture-pattern which was their background? Was there any correlation between their social heritage and their inventions? Harry Elmer Barnes thought that the "city state civilization" of the Greeks explained many traits of the Greeks. What were the characteristics of the city-state civilization? Each city state was an independent political entity; the several city-states had a common language, a common religion, but no political unity. A considerable section of the population consisted of slaves. The citizens lived on the labour of their slaves and had leisure to indulge in politics, art and literature. They lived in two-storied houses, built of sun-dried bricks, the streets were narrow and winding; refuse was thrown on the streets as there was no proper drainage. The people ate two meals a day, consisting of bread, fish, wine, beans and olives. The kitchens had no chimneys; the houses had

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1. Turner, THE GREAT CULTURAL TRADITIONS, p. 16.

court-yards. The men spent most of their time in the open discussing politics, watching festivals and games, or taking part in debates. The wives of the citizens stayed at home, while their men sought recreation and enjoyment in the company of their accomplished mistresses.

If such was the culture-pattern of the Greeks, which distinguished the Greeks from non-Greeks, was the pattern responsible for the discoveries and inventions of Archimedes, Euclid and other scientists? If the culture-pattern was the common social inheritance of all the Greeks of the day, how did it inspire only a small fraction, a microscopic few, of the Greeks to make important discoveries and inventions, while the great majority made none? Given the same social inheritance, even the few inventors did not invent the same things. There seems to be no relation, much less a correlation, between the common social heritage of the Greeks and the different inventions of a few individual Greeks.

Secondly, did the inventions of Archimedes, for instance, find social acceptance among the Greeks and all of them and among none else, then or since? It may be that most of the Greeks of his day did not understand or accept his inventions and discoveries. And some non-Greeks did. Since then they have been accepted by an increasing number of individuals all over the world, Greek and non-Greek. They are now integral truth, valid for all, who have access to it.

Did Archimedes make his inventions because he was a Greek, lived in two-storied house with a court-yard but without a chimney and without plumbing, ate fish and olives and watched sports and worked on the jury or had slaves to drudge for him? Was it because of the Greek culture-pattern? Were his inventions due to "inward

growth" of the Greek culture and therefore indigenous to it and readily acceptable to the Greeks, but foreign to non-Greeks and therefore unacceptable to them, because they would not fit in with their culture-pattern? Could any social scientists have foretold whether or not Archimedes would have made the inventions, and they would be acceptable to the Greeks and unacceptable to the non-Greeks? There is no sociological law, no correlation, between the Greece as a culture area, the Greeks as a group having a culture-pattern and the inventions of Archimedes and their spread. They did not spread among the Greeks by inward growth and to non-Greeks by diffusion. They just diffused from the individual inventor to others, who were imitators, Greeks and non-Greeks, then and since.

Granting for the purpose of argument that the inventions of Archimedes were as much social as individual, and that they were correlated with the contemporary Greek-Culture, what was the Greek Culture area? Was Greek Culture ecologically related to the Greek Culture area? Was Greek Culture produced by Greeks in Greece? It has been said that "The earliest age of Greek culture was an integral part of the Aegean civilization, distinctly an Oriental culture . . . Much of the Greek intellectual life owed its origin to the previous Oriental achievements in science and the development of the art of writing,"<sup>1</sup> And Greek civilization has been claimed to the foundation of Western civilization. If that be the case, *civilization is one single continuam in time.*

It will be recalled that Hankins advanced the view that "the frequency of superior individuals born within a group is of the greatest significance to that group in cul-

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1. David and Barnes, INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY p. 85.

tural evolution." He illustrated it by saying that, of two groups otherwise similar, one might produce occasionally geniuses like Newton, Darwin, Pasteur, while the other might not, and that the first would produce cultural levels which the other could only imitate. Here it is postulated that Darwin, for instance, belongs to a group, the cultural level of which alone he raised by his inventions.

Which is the group to which Darwin belonged? What was its culture-pattern? How was it correlated with Darwin's creations? And did it raise the culture-level of his group only? A group consists of individuals who have something in common. Which was the group with which Darwin had something in common? Was it his family, the British nation, the white race, the Christian community or the Cambridge University? He had something in common with each of these groups and many others. But they do not all coincide; they are all distinct groups. Which, then, was the particular group to which Darwin belonged and which had anything to do with his great biological theories? Though he belonged to Christian group, his theories were bitterly assailed by some of the most eminent Christians, because they were inconsistent with the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Neither the British Nation, nor the white race, nor the Cambridge University had anything to do with his inventions. The members of the British nation or the white race or the Cambridge University did not come together one fine morning with Darwin and by their co-operative effort produce Darwinism. It was not a group product, not a social creation. It was his own individual invention.

Is the "Raman Effect" *India's* contribution? The four hundred millions of Indians did not come together and by a co-operative act of theirs create the "Raman

Effect". It was the work of Sir C. V. Raman as an individual. It had no relation to the so-called Indian background which he and millions of other Indians inherited. Most Indians do not understand his work, much less did they contribute to its making. And there are non-Indians who understand his work.

Is *ahimsa* the contribution of *India*? Mahatma Gandhi preaches it, and he is an Indian. But on that account is *ahimsa* Indian in any sense, or his own personal contribution? A trait, to be Indian, must be shared by all or most Indians; it must form part of the Indian culture-pattern, and must distinguish Indians from non-Indians. Does *ahimsa* form part of the culture-pattern of Indians, of all Indians or most of them, and distinguish Indians from non-Indians? Or, is it the creation of an individual, who, by coincidence, happens to be Indian by nationality? *Ahimsa* is the Mahatma's contribution; and its potential range is humanity as a whole. Neither in its origin, nor in its appeal or diffusion-potential has it anything to do with India. Some individuals in the world may accept it, others may pay lip-service to it, others frankly reject it. It is not indigenous to India and therefore readily acceptable to India but foreign to the rest of the world and therefore exotic and unacceptable to it. Every trait is created by an individual, and its diffusion-potential is humanity; it does not originate in a group and diffuse to another group, or be confined to a group.

#### 4. Cumulative Origin of Culture-Traits

While every invention is the work of an individual, it is very often based on the inventions of *other individuals who preceded him in the same line*. To take the instance of Darwin. He had read Lyell's *Principles of Geology* and

was impressed by Lyell's theory that the earth's history was vastly longer than the Bible had fixed and by the evidence that simpler and primitive forms of fossils were found in the older strata of the earth and more highly developed ones in the more recent strata. Lyell's theories were the basis on which Darwin built the theory of evolution of the complex from the simple in the process of time. He had also read and been impressed by Malthus' *Essay in Population*, which said that population increased faster than the means of subsistence and that therefore there was a struggle for existence in which many perished. On this he built the idea of the survival of the fittest through natural selection. Thus, *Darwin built on the inventions of other individuals, like Lyell and Malthus*. In that sense, Darwin's inventions may be said to have *soicial* origin and not individual. But the distinction between "social" in the sense and in the current sense is of the utmost importance. The culture-heritage of Darwin, which formed the back-ground of his own inventions, was the inventions of other individuals who preceded him in his particular field of invention and not the contemporary culture-pattern which included thousands of traits, shared unevenly by millions of his contemporaries but which were irrelevant to his inventions.

Let us take the history of electricity. Thales of Miletus, Greece, discovered about 600 B. C. that amber, when rubbed, attracted bits of leaves, etc. William Gilbert (1540-1603), physician to Queen Elizabeth, discovered that the attractive force of amber was not magnetic and therefore called it *electric*. Otto Von Guericke, (1602-1686) Mayor of Magdeburg, Germany, discovered the transferability of electricity. Stephen Gray (1696-1736) discovered that some substances were conductors and other non-conductors of



electricity. C. F. de C. du Fay (1699–1739), of France, discovered positive and negative charges of electricity. E. G. Von Kleist, a German clergyman, discovered in 1745 that electricity could be stored. So did Pieter van Musschembroek, professor in the University of Leyden, who invented the “Leyden Jar.” This was subsequently improved by Sir William Watson (1715–1787) and Dr. John Bevis (1696–1771). Benjamin Franklin about 1752 proved the identity of electricity and lightening. Francis Aepinus (1724–1802) extended Franklin’s theory to magnetism. Luigi Galvani, (1737–1798) Alessandro Volta (1745–1827), William Nicholson (1753–1815), Sir Humphry Davy (1778–1829), Hans Christian Orested, Michael Faraday (1791–1867), William Thomson, later Lord Kelvin (1824–1907), James Clerk-Maxwell (1831–1879), Henrich Rudolf Hertz (1857–1894), and J. J. Thomson made further contributions, each building on the work of his predecessors in the line of electric research and invention. Their work enabled Alexander Graham Bell to invent the telephone, Thomas Alva Edison to invent the electric light and William Roentgen the X-rays and so on. Similarly, in every field and in most cases every inventor availed himself of the work of his predecessors in his line and added his own contribution. It is in this sense, that every invention may be said to be social; it is the cumulative end-result of several inventions in succession, but each specific invention is still the work of an individual and not of a group.

## **5 Differential Diffusion**

It would appear then that there are culture-traits, but not culture-patterns or cultures. All the traits of every age and area collectively constitute culture. As has already been stated each trait is invented by an individual and each trait diffuses from its inventor to its imitators. Each trait has its own independent diffusion in speed and direction. If the diffu-

sion of one trait is the same as that of another, it is due more to coincidence than to correlation. Christianity, cricket, and ice-cream have independent origins and diffusion. If a number of individuals have all these at the same time, it is a coincidence.

The diffusibility of all culture-traits is not however the same; their diffusion-potential is not uniform. Some, like the lucifer match, have a high diffusion-potential; they tend to become universal and have the whole world as their culture-area and the whole of humanity as their culture-group. But others, like the Baiga dreams, have a low diffusion-potential; they have limited diffusion. The cinema has a wider diffusion-potential than Spengler's DECLINE OF THE WEST; machinery and medicine greater diffusion-potential than Fundamentalism and Gothic architecture. The chemical contributions of Joseph Priestly have had wider diffusion than his contributions to theology. Different culture-traits have differential diffusibility.

This difference in diffusion-potential seems to be due to the difference in the validity and utility of the culture-traits themselves. Any individual, whatever be his own cultural background, will readily accept the lucifer-match, appreciate smooth roads, effective medicine, but not equally readily accept opinions regarding the Dollar pool, the Sterling Balances, tariffs, and even less readily a custom like tatooing, or a religion like Mormonism or Brahmo Samaj, etc. *Acceptability is not so much in the individual as in the culture trait itself. Diffusion-potential is a function of the trait and not of the person.*

Culture-traits may be roughly classified under three broad groups: the Physical Sciences, the Social Sciences and Fine Arts. *Culture-traits belonging to the physical sciences*

*have a larger diffusion-potential than those belonging to the social sciences; and the culture-traits belonging to the social sciences have a larger diffusion-potential than those of the Fine Arts;.* Astronomy, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry pure and applied, have a maximum of objective validity and tend to become universal, if diffusion is free and unimpeded by external barriers. Fine arts, like music, architecture, religion customs and ceremonies, etc., have a maximum of subjective validity and tend to have minimum diffusibility. The Social sciences are betwix and between the two; they share to some extent the objective validity of the physical sciences and the subjective validity of the Fine Arts, and have a diffusion-potential somewhere between the two.

Astronomy is an objective science; it is valid for all, and its validity does not vary with individuals: what is valid for one is valid for all. It makes no sense to speak of Greek astronomy being valid for the Greeks, of Hindu Astronomy, Baiga astronomy and American astronomy being valid for the Hindus, Baiga and Americans respectively, and enquire if Greek astronomy is compatible with Hindu culture, or American astronomy is compatible with and acceptable to the Baigas. Similarly, mathematics is of universal validity. Two and two make four, irrespective of the race, the sex, the civic condition, the economic status, the hobbies of individuals. The laws of physics and chemistry, of engineering and agriculture, forestry and mining, medicine and surgery, are common to all humanity and have universal objective validity and diffusibility. So also, roads and bridges, cinemas and radios, railroads and automobiles, ships and planes, posts and telegraphs, telephones and wireless, have universal validity, and are acceptable to all, if diffusion be free.

On the other hand, not all the individuals of a race, a religion, a language, a profession or an area necessarily enjoy

the same book, the same picture, the same song, the same religion, the same games, the same clothes and the same tastes and customs. It does not follow that because there are four hundred millions of individuals who are by nationality Indians, therefore they must all enjoy reading the same book or singing the same song. Not even the children of the same parents have identical tastes. Not even the same individual has the same tastes as an adult and as a child. As a child, he might have been thrilled to read the *Hitopadesa* but as an adult he may prefer the *Bhagvat Gita*. In the same day, within a few hours or minutes, the tastes of an individual may change. The song which fascinated him at first will pall on him if it be repeated again and again in quick succession. Objectively the song was the same; the same gramophone machine played the same song in identical tones. Nevertheless, it had lost its validity to the same listener. Its validity was subjective, and it changed in a few minutes. It is meaningless to enquire why the same song is not valid for everybody, even as it is meaningless to enquire if Hindu roads and bridges are valid for the Baiga, American electricity is acceptable to the Chinese.

The Social sciences stand betwix and between. All the individuals who have a race or a religion or a language in common need not necessarily share common opinions in social matters. On the same set of facts, different social scientists come to different conclusions. Even the members of the same family do not necessarily share similar opinions; some may be pro-Congress and other pro-Maha Sabha; some may favour the Wavell Plan and others reject it.

Thus, whether a culture-trait will have maximum, intermediate or minimum diffusion depends on the category to which it belongs and not the person. A culture-trait which has a maximum of objective validity and utility will have

maximum, diffusion potential; a trait which has minimum objective validity and maximum subjective validity will have minimum diffusion-potential. *Objective facts are universal subjective tastes are individual: social opinions stand between.* Biological needs are few in number, and each is universal in demand, and the culture-traits which meet these wants will have maximum diffusibility; aesthetic tastes are many; each has a limited appeal, and the culture-traits which have aesthetic appeal will have limited diffusion.

## 6 Traits and Individuals

We postulated that in the world there are individual human beings and individual culture-traits, not organic groups of either. The individuals and the culture-traits form innumerable permutations and combinations. Each trait is capable of independent diffusion, and each individual is capable of independent acquisition. Christianity, parliamentary government, cricket, eating beef and pork, industrialism, Pelmanism, motor-cars, under-ground railways and a host of other culture-traits occur in England. But they are not all linked together to form an organic unit and do not all diffuse as a unit. Each of these is capable of independent diffusion. We have in India industrialists who are not Englishmen, who are not Christians, who do not eat beef or pork, who do not travel on underground railways and so on. Different permutations and combinations of the culture-traits occur in both areas.

Each individual acquires several culture-traits, and each trait diffuses to several individuals. No two individuals need necessarily have the same set of traits, and no two traits need necessarily have the same number of individuals sharing them. Each individual is a member of as many groups as he has culture-traits, and there are as many culture-groups as there are culture-traits. The same individual may belong to

Muslim group, a democratic group, a Rotary group, an industrial group, a joint-family group, a cricket group, a group of painters, a group of electrical engineers and so on. The individuals who are members of the Rotary group need not necessarily be members of the cricket group, or the Muslim group or the democratic group. A number of individuals who have a trait in common and form a group for that trait, need not necessarily have other traits in common also. Membership of one group does not necessarily mean membership of others also.

While each culture-trait has its own culture-area, which may vary in age and area, the culture-areas of any two culture-traits need not necessarily coincide. The culture-area of Hinduism need not coincide with the culture-area of industrialism or cricket, or any other culture-trait. No two culture-traits need be co-extensive, co-terminal and co-eval with each other. Each culture trait divides humanity into a dichotomy: those who have acquired it and those who have not, at the moment of observation.

## CHAPTER VII

### Implications Of The Theory

The implications of this theory of the origin and diffusion of culture-traits and of their differential diffusion-potential are fundamental; they invalidate many of the current concepts of cultures.

The distinction between foreign and indigenous, culture-traits, between culture-change through "growth from within," and through "diffusion from without", vanishes. For instance, the concept that Buddhism is indigenous to India, a product of inward growth, but foreign to China, to which it diffused from without, is invalid. Buddhism was originated by the individual, the Buddha; he built it on the basis of his predecessors who made contributions to philosophy; but without any reference to numerous culture traits of his day, concerning food, clothing, shelter, recreation, ceremonies, habits, customs, and institutions, political, social, educational, and economic. From him, the individual inventor, it spread to other individuals who happened to be men or women, of different races and religions, professions and vocations, in and out of India. The culture-trait was new until it was accepted. It was not indigenous to India and foreign to China; it was not a product of Indian culture which diffused to Chinese culture.

Edison invented the electric light. He built on the inventions of his predecessors in the electric field, but not on the innumerable culture-traits prevalent in the world or in America or even his home at the time. From him the trait spread to others Americans and non-Americans, in all

parts of the world. It was foreign to everybody when it was invented, and indigenous since its acceptance. It was not indigenous to Americans and foreign to, say, the Japanese. Every American is as much indebted to him as every non-American who uses it. Edison was the creator, all these who use it now, of every race, language, nationality, sex, vocation and location, are imitators.

Democracy is not a British invention, compatible only with the British culture-pattern and foreign to and incompatible with other culture-patterns. It is said that in Athens about 500 B. C. democracy was effective inasmuch as the citizens had gained full control of government, made laws and elected their magistrates. Is it really contended that even two thousand individuals had simultaneously and independently conceived democracy, instead one of them suggesting it and others accepting it subsequently? History may have no record of the individual who invented democracy, but the subsequent history records the individuals who laboured for the extension of it. Belonging to the group of social sciences, a mixture of objective and subjective validity, it has not the same universal diffusibility as, say, the radio. But it is not indigenous to the West and foreign to the East; it was new at one time even in England.

If the concept of a foreign culture is invalid, the contempt implied in *imitation* of foreign culture goes by the board. Imitation is diffusion or spread of culture-traits. As Prof. Toynbee said, "Imitation by the vast majority of what an infinitesimal minority created is the normal method of the growth of culture". Without diffusion there can be no culture at all, and diffusion is imitation.

When Dhirendranath Roy objects to so-called westernization of India, he was really objecting to imposition and



not to voluntary imitation or acceptance. Unlike imposition, imitation or acceptance implies free choice by those who imitate or accept. He himself admits that "Things of an alien civilization can be beneficial to the natives only when these are rightly understood and sincerely desired by them of their own free will. But such is not at all possible where there is any imposition or compulsion"<sup>1</sup>. He went on to say, "If the imposition of an exotic civilization is so disastrous to the primitive people, how much more would it be to those who have already their own distinct and well-developed civilization?"<sup>2</sup>.

This is an entirely different proposition: free choice or imposition. It has nothing to do with foreign or indigenous character of culture-traits. Imposition from within may be as unwelcome as imposition from without any culture-group. Nazism was imposed both in Germany and in France and was resented by some in both. Elwin himself records that the "Indian aboriginal is all too ready to respond to the slightest hint that he should abandon his old culture and interests" and this he considered was "unfortunate". Elwin would consider foreign culture injurious to the aborigines even if it was not imposed. Further, Dr. Hu Shih says that western civilization was not imposed on China by a foreign nation by force or conquest, not even by the indigenous ruling class, as was the case in Japan. In China Western civilization spread by what he calls "diffused assimilation", without the intervention of a "powerful ruling class" or "centralised leadership in culture" as in Japan.<sup>4</sup>

The culture-area concept also needs to be modified. Culture-area is not the geographical area of a culture-pattern,

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1. ROY, THE SPIRIT OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION, p. 14.
  2. IBID p. 14.
  3. Elwin, THE BAIGE, p. 512
  4. Hu. Shih, THE CHINESE RENAISSANCE, p. 24.

like the Chaldean, the Chinese, and the Western, but of each culture-trait. Each culture-trait has its own culture-area, which may be a shifting one. From the culture centre, where it was invented, it spreads to other areas, even as it spreads from the inventor to others individuals. The path of diffusion is its culture-area. The culture-area of the match-stick is practically as wide as the inhabited world, while that of Bewar cultivation is limited to the Baiga-chak.

The concept of dynamic and static cultures also needs emendation. Certain culture-traits have been more dynamic than others. For instance, science and applied science have been dynamic, while certain customs, like eating with spoon and fork, have been practically static. Funeral ceremonies have undergone the least change, while means of transportation have undergone revolutionary changes; why, in the last few decades we have moved from the bullock-cart stage to that of the aeroplane!

But there is no warrant for the presumption that all social customs will be generally static in future. According to report in the daily press it would appear that the London Court of Appeal gave a ruling on the 17th July 1945 on the meaning of the word "consummation" in the Matrimonial Clauses Act of 1937. Judgment was given in favour of a wife who was married for the last fourteen years and who complained that she could not have babies because her husband insisted on the use of contraceptives. Lawyers held that the whole complexion of the divorce law had been changed by that decision, the first of its kind ever heard in England. It was anticipated that hundreds, perhaps thousands of marriages might be affected by the ruling.

Similarly, the recommendations of the Hindu Law Committee, if and when enacted, are likely to bring about

what may be called revolutionary changes in the customs of the Hindus.

The main point is that there seems to be no sociological law which enables us to predict the future course of cultural changes. As Franz Boas said, "anthropology can never become an exact science in the sense that knowledge of the status of a society at any given moment will permit us to predict what is going to happen. We may be able to *understand* social phenomena. I do not believe that we shall ever be able to *explain* them by reducing one and all of them to social laws".<sup>1</sup> There is no cultural determinism, no pre-determination of the changes of culture-traits. All that can be said is that, "seen retrospectively, they may appear like a predetermined growth".<sup>2</sup> Christianity was not in conformity with the culture which preceded it; and nobody could foretell that Christianity was to be born and was to spread the way it did. The theory of the divine right of kings in England could not anticipate that it would be overthrown in favour of responsible democratic government; Trade Unions, the British Labour Party and the Labour Government, the Protestant revolt against Catholicism, overthrow of the Czarist regime and the succession by Bolshevism were not cultural predeterminants, which had to happen in obedience to any law of cultural determinism. Prof. F.A. Hayek pointed out in his "*THE ROAD TO SERFDOM*", that fifteen years ago the possibility of totalitarianism prevailing in Germany would have appeared fantastic not only to nine-tenths of the Germans themselves but also to the most hostile foreign observer.<sup>3</sup>

1. Boas, *ANTHROPOLOGY AND MODERN LIFE*, pp. 215-216.

2. *Ibid*, p. 246.

3. *Reader's Digest*, April 1945, p. 2

It is invalid to speak of the birth, growth and death of civilizations. What is meant by the decline and death of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Assyrian and other civilizations? All the traits of any of these cultures were not born at the same time or integrated into an organic union, to die at the same time. Each culture trait was born independently of the others, was perhaps invented by a different person at a different place and time. It is a coincidence that they were all together at any particular time and place and in particular relations to one another. Each trait had its independent career, and may survive for a longer or shorter period or for ever, irrespective of other traits. Some, like moral concepts, never die. Others, like the oil-lamp, survive until displaced by more efficient traits, like electricity. Others still like slavery, a culture trait of ancient Greece, are dying out. The achievements of Archimedes, another so-called Greek trait, survive and will survive. The city-state may have disappeared, but democracy survives. If we make a list of all the culture-traits which existed in any particular area at any given time and make a similar list at a subsequent time, we shall know which of the traits have disappeared and which have survived and which have been added in the meanwhile. It is like population. At any time in any area there are a number of people. Some were just born, other are in middle age and still others in their decline. If the census enumeration is made some time later, the older people will have perhaps disappeared, the middle-aged one will have grown old, and the new-born ones will have become youths and there will be new individuals born since the last enumeration. The only difference between the two is that all human individuals must die sooner or later, while all culture-traits need not necessarily die. Scientific facts and moral values, may survive indefinitely.

## Summary

The current concept of the world being a mosaic of geographical culture-areas, each having a number of human beings constituting the culture-group, sharing in common a number of culture-traits organically woven into an enduring culture pattern, and originating, developing and dying as a unit, is fallacious. Equally fallacious are the concepts that new culture-traits are invented by groups and diffuse from group to group, that some traits originate from within the group and therefore were indigenous to that group and in consequence acceptable to it, and that other traits developed without the group and were therefore foreign and unacceptable to it, and that new traits shall fit in with the existing pattern of the group, or be repulsed. There is no foundation for the theory of cultural determinism. The question of one culture group imitating, tolerating or resisting the culture of another group does not arise.

Each culture-trait was invented by someone, somewhere, sometime. It was invented independently of other traits and is capable of independent diffusion from the one inventor to the many imitators, and has its own diffusion-potential. No two culture traits are necessarily co-extensive, co-terminal or co-eval. If they are, it is a mere coincidence, and not a correlation. The diffusion-potential varies with the character of the culture-trait. If it belongs to the Physical Sciences, which have a maximum of objective validity, it has a maximum diffusion-potential; if it belongs to the Fine Arts, which have minimum of objective validity but a maximum of subjective one, it will have minimum diffusion-potential; if it belongs to the Social Sciences, which are betwixt and between the other two in subjective and objective validity, it will have a medium diffusion-potential. Whether the potential will be realised or not

depends on the freedom of transmission of the trait. Every trait divides humanity into dichotomous groups; the one which has acquired it already and one which has not yet done so. Culture-traits may be new or old, but not foreign or indigenous.

Each individual human-being acquires a varying number of culture-traits; no two individuals, much less a larger number, need necessarily have the same number of culture-traits. Most individuals imitate what a few invent. Inventions are made by individuals and not groups of individuals. Inventions are not correlated with the innumerable culture-traits contemporary to the inventor, but are built on the inventions of his predecessors in the particular line of invention.

Each individual is a member of as many culture-groups as he has culture-traits: he is not a member of one group only.

Evaluation and direction are valid when applied to culture-traits and not to culture-patterns. The radio is useful and good and should be welcomed; prostitution is bad and should be eliminated, irrespective of whether they were invented in England by the British; or by Indians in India. Penicillin is good whoever invented it; and untouchability is bad even if it is practised in India and sanctified by immemorial usage, even as slavery is bad even if the Bible sanctioned it.

Moral values have universal validity in age and area.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Conflicts of Cultures

Conflict is a psychological state of pain and unhappiness in an individual due largely to divided loyalties in behaviour. For instance, a person may become unhappy when his obligations to his wife do not coincide with those to his mother, or when his self-interest does not coincide with public interest. Culture-conflicts are largely due to the identification of 'an individual or a group of individuals with one or more culture-traits, to the feeling that a culture *belongs* to some people and is *owned* by them, to the concept of "mine" and "thine" with reference to culture-traits.

Take, for example, languages. Conflicts based on "my" language and "your" language are found among many peoples in many parts of the world. Some Irish people believe that the Gaelic language is "their own"; it "belongs" to them; they must therefore use it and be proud to do so. They should resent if anybody belittled it. They believe that the English language "belongs" to the British, and is, therefore, foreign to themselves. They even hate it because they hate British rule in Ireland in the past. They consider it derogatory and even humiliating to use the English language.

Similarly, in South Africa there has been rivalry between English and Africaans, the languages used by the British and Boer sections of the white people. It led to great bitterness and unhappiness. Some Boers claimed that Africaans was "their own" language, and that English "belonged" to the British section, and therefore foreign to

themselves. Most of them however learn English because they find it almost indispensable, and they feel aggrieved that most of the British do not care to learn Afrikaans, the language of the Boers. "We" learn "your" language, but "you" do not care to learn "our" language. Hence the conflict.

In India also there is a conflict of languages. A section of Muslims believe that Urdu is their own language, feel happy if it be recognised as the *lingua franca* of India and feel very unhappy if Hindi, said to be the language of the Hindus, should claim that honour. Many nationalist Indians not only consider English as "foreign" but also hateful because it is the language of the British and they hate British imperialism in India. In a letter written in May 1945, to the Mian Iftikaruddin, Mahatma Gandhi said, "Give up this habit of writing and speaking in English, if you want to be free." Many Englishmen claim that English is their own language and it is the language of the free.

Commenting on the exclusion of French as an official language of the San Francisco Conference, the Swiss poet, George Hales, wrote in the *Despeche de Geneve*: "This gives a bitter taste to the recollections of the numerous pledges given to France, according to which every possible thing would be done to reintegrate her position as a great power. The exclusion appears as one more victory scored by force against right . . . At a time when a form of tyranny is on the verge of collapse and when Allied nations, which were linked together so far by similar military interests, will need the force of reason to establish a lasting and just peace, it is then that the voice of the only country capable to call the peoples of the world to justice and liberty is eliminated. Its language is excluded ;



yet France's mission is to legitimate the aspirations to freedom of all the oppressed nations."<sup>1</sup>

To whom does a language "belong"? Does a language "belong" to anybody at all? Language is not a biological inheritance; nobody was born with a language. Everybody learnt the language or languages he speaks, even as he acquired other culture-traits that he has, the food he eats, the dress he wears, the house he lives in, the religion he professes, the vocation he follows, the amusements he enjoys and the superstitions he believes in. Everybody *acquires* culture-traits from others, who, in their turn, acquired them ultimately from those who invented them. A language "belongs" to him who acquires it, and anybody can acquire any language in the world, if he has the facilities and the urge. No language belongs, much less exclusively, to anybody. Gaelic is not the exclusive possession of the citizens of Eire; it can be acquired both by Irish and non-Irish individuals. English is not the exclusive possession of the English; both British and non-British individuals acquire it including the Boers, the Negroes and the Indians in South Africa, some Chinese, some Japanese, some Turks, some French and so on. Urdu is not the exclusive language of the Muslims in India, nor Hindi the exclusive language of the Hindus. All Muslims even in India do not speak Urdu, much less all the Muslims in the world; all Hindus in India do not speak Hindi.

There are languages and there are individuals. Any individual is free to learn any language. Language is not *property* to be *owned* exclusively, and labelled "mine" and "thine". One may describe the distribution of a language at any particular time. Its concentrations or densities may vary from place to place, from time to time. But no language

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1. French Weekly Newsletter, New Delhi, 14th April 1945.

is linked to a race, a religion, a philosophy, a nationality, a superstition, or other culture-elements.

In as much as no language belongs to anybody and anybody is free to acquire any language, according to his needs, tastes and opportunities, a conflict over languages is, rationally speaking, quite unnecessary. Language is a non-material instrument for the conveyance of thought, and not a material possession to be owned.

Similar is the case with all other culture-traits. None of them is biologically inherited ; all of them are acquired from others who acquired them before. None of them can be owned exclusively by anybody. When we say that cricket is an English game, French is the language of the French, Vedanta is the philosophy of the Indians, ice-cream is American, it is only in a descriptive and not possessive sense. They are not "property" to be owned by anybody. In any event, if anything of "mine" can be acquired by "you" and can become "yours" it is no longer "mine". It is "ours". The particular cannot diffuse but only the universal.

## CHAPTER IX

### Culture and Property

There is however a fundamental difference between property and culture-traits other than property. Property itself is a culture-trait. But it is distinguished from other traits by the fact that it can be "owned" by individuals while other traits cannot. Material property, like a house, a book, a mine, a factory, a copy-right, can be owned. But a language, a religion, a science, a custom, a game, a law, a moral code, a philosophy, cannot be owned. If A had a hundred rupees and shared them with B equally, A will have only fifty rupees left; his property is halved. But if A knew a language and shared it with B equally, his share of the language is not halved; there will now be two persons who know it.

There can be conflicts over the diffusion of property because it can be exclusively owned. But conflicts over other culture-traits, over-knowledge, are wholly unnecessary, for they cannot be exclusively owned. But at present conflicts arise over culture-traits other than property because many of us do not distinguish the fundamental difference between the two, and speak of "my" culture and "your" culture in the possessive sense, treat "my" culture as my "property," which I should conserve and defend against "yours." Lord Ronaldshay, subsequently Lord Zetland, treated science as property when he wondered "whether in the scientific knowledge which was in a special degree the property of the peoples of the West, we do not possess a golden gift which we can offer to the peoples of the East."<sup>1</sup> Lars Ringbom said that

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1. Ronaldshay, INDIA, p. 280.

“the section of a civilized people with an individualistic reaction comes to look on culture as its own work and property.”<sup>1</sup> But knowledge is not property to be owned. Who “owns” Kalidasa’s poetry, Shankara’s Vedanta, Mahatma Gandhi’s non-violence, the contributions to scientific knowledge made by Sir J. C. Bose and Sir C. V. Raman? Darwinism cannot be owned. Knowledge diffuses from him who knows to him who does not at any particular moment.

1. Ringbom, THE RENEWAL OF CULTURE, p. 90.

## Chapter X

### Conclusion

Civilization is one; it is not divisible into several civilizations or cultures like Eastern and Western, Primitive or advanced, each with a culture-area, a culture-group and an enduring culture-pattern of culture-traits. The one civilization consists of innumerable culture-traits, ever increasing in number and widening the culture-base. Every one of them was invented by someone, somewhere, sometime and diffused from the inventor to the imitators, few or many at any particular time. Most survive; a few die out. Every culture-trait divides humanity into two groups, those who have it and those who do not have it at the time. A trait may be new or old to anybody, but not foreign or indigenous. Culture-traits, other than property, cannot be owned by anybody; they are common heritage of humanity. The diffusibility of a culture-trait depends, in the first instance, on the absence of barriers, natural or human; secondly, on the culture-potential of the individual; and thirdly, on the culture-potential of the trait itself, its objective validity. Traits belonging to the Physical Sciences, pure and applied, have a maximum of objective validity and, in consequence, have maximum diffusion-potential; traits belonging to the Fine Arts have a minimum of objective validity and have a minimum of diffusion-potential; traits belonging to the Social Sciences are midway between the other two. *Objective Facts* are valid for all individuals at all times; *subjective tastes* are valid only to particular moments; *opinions* stand midway between. Moral values are common to all humanity in all places and at all times. The variation is in

honouring them; some individuals are more truthful in certain circumstances than in others.

Conflicts can occur over sharing of property because it is limited in quantity and is capable of being owned exclusively. Communism seeks to eliminate conflicts based on property. Whether it succeeds or not, there is no need for conflicts based on culture-traits other than property. They can be acquired by all and owned by none. Facts of the physical sciences are accepted by all and cause no conflicts; conflicts of opinions in social sciences can be avoided by submission to majority opinion: conflicts over subjective tastes can be avoided by the toleration of the tastes of others. Progress in civilization consists in maximising the field of objective facts and minimising the field of semi-subjective opinions and wholly subjective tastes; in maximising the field of objective science and minimising the field of subjective superstition.



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